

THE UK'S BEST SELLING TATTOO MAGAZINE

# ink Deep

50  
GREAT BRITISH  
TATTOO ARTISTS

**Free Inside**

50 GREAT BRITISH  
TATTOO ARTISTS

## BOY OH BOY

DO WE HAVE A  
BURSTING AT THE  
SEAMS ISSUE FOR  
YOU THIS MONTH

Let's begin with an  
exclusive photo shoot  
of the Japanese master

## HORIMYO

in action.

Then we  
checked with  
the girls in

## DRAG

and their  
themed ink.

Before moving  
along to bring  
you part two of  
our time spent  
with photographer  
extraordinaire,

## DIRK BEHLAU

Also, we lovingly and  
proudly parade an unusual  
array of misfits in our supplement

## 50 GREAT BRITISH TATTOO ARTISTS

## JESSICA GAHRING

teaches us a thing or two  
about persistence in the  
final episode of our  
NY Ink series.

And, oh  
Jealousy,  
we went  
out for  
lunch  
with our  
sultry cover  
model

# Teah Jung

But not before  
we spent  
some quality  
art time with

**MATH,  
JEREMIAH  
BESHEARS  
and JOE JACKSON**

And wrapped up the month  
with a weekend at the

## NORTHAMPTON TATTOO CON

Plus all the usual suspects, inside...

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# The needle has landed



Dirk Behlau

## THAT'S MY TRUMPET...

For as long as I can remember, I always wanted to write for Rolling Stone. At 43 – maybe 44 – I'm not that old, but I'm still talking the early '80s when this dream kicked in and it never really went away. Until sometime in the last 12 months.

What I really wanted was to drive a magazine that was capable of anything, one that could throw anything in the grinder and the readership would get it (99 percent of the time) so long as you stayed true to the source material. Turns out that's exactly what I got, but it's not called Rolling Stone anymore, it's called Skin Deep. I'm not sure what they did with Rolling Stone, but it's the shadow of the magazine it used to be – and I don't simply mean in it's production, but in everything right down to its stance on the world.

There's not a lot I can say about that publication that hasn't already been said, but (I'm going a really long way around towards saying something here – stick with it) on the grapevine, I quite

often hear the comment 'no rock stars'. I know what this means. Basically nobody wants to work with an artist who is a dick... and that's right. There's no room for anybody to swank around thinking they're better than everybody else. But rock stars? All the ones I've ever known worked like freaking dogs to get to the

but somehow running an advert with 'no pop stars' in your text really doesn't look right. In fact, it's so wrong it makes you look like the very dicks you're trying to avoid.

Damn. I've lost my train of thought now. And it was all going so well. Oh yeah... in all of the genres you could possibly work in, tattooing

IN ALL OF THE GENRES YOU COULD POSSIBLY WORK IN, TATTOOING IS QUITE POSSIBLY THE MOST GENUINE. IF YOU'RE IN LED ZEPPELIN, YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH FLUFFING A RIFF HERE AND THERE, THAT'S PART OF WHAT THE ART OF ROCK IS

top. Sure, there's some dicks in the mix, but take a look around. I've never heard of a rock star who you couldn't say they'd got there for a reason, but then again, my point of reference is some way back. Seems to me that these days, everybody is called a rock star because the marketing people tell you they are. Rock is rock. Pop is something else entirely.

Pop tells you everything is OK in the world. Rock tells you that everything is not, but you can do something about it. That's the difference,

is quite possibly the most genuine. If you're in Led Zeppelin, you can get away with fluffing a riff here and there, that's part of what the art of rock is. Level the same phrase at a tattooist and it's not so easy to get away with. If the eyes on that portrait are too far apart and the teeth look like a truck left the road and hit a graveyard, somebody is going to tell you and no amount of bullshit will get you out of it because it's there forever and we are all only as good as the last thing we did.

Led Zeppelin don't drop notes accidentally. They were so good at what they did that it was called art, and that's where we're all trying to get to, isn't it? Me and the rest of the crew as writers and photographers, the tattooists and whatever it is the thousands of readers of the mag do all day long. All of us.

Except for Rolling Stone, who used to be the bomb, but are now quite content to live off glories that ran out maybe 20 years ago.

I like having them around because it reminds me not to be like that...

*Sam*



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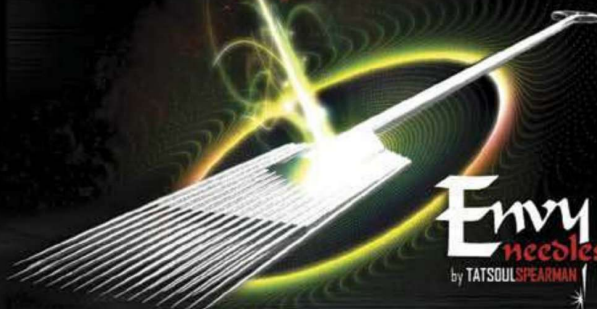
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- 36 **HORIMYO**  
Here's a nice little exclusive for you – Horimyo need say nothing as our photographer David Marden knuckles down to do all the work.

74 **JOE JACKSON**  
He's been making waves on the UK scene for quite some time now. If you've not heard him rattling some cage or other, you really should get out more.

88 **JEREMIAH BESHEARS**  
With a nifty little line in style, and a good story to tell, Jeremiah explains all and gives his advice on how to get yourself moving and not 'stare at cows all day'.

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THIS MONTH'S SUPPLEMENT  
50 GREAT BRITISH TATTOO ARTISTS

## CELEBRITY SKIN

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Our cover model this month, we caught up with Leah and talked about her music, modelling and the state of the nation. The tattooed nation that is...

80 **JESSICA GAHRING**  
Dropping in on Jessica just about wraps up our NY INK series. Some people never run out of things to say...

## READER PROFILE

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A sleazy-punk band with grown up songs, great image and live show to match? Yeah, we couldn't resist either, especially when we saw the ink.

## SPECIAL FEATURES

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One man, one camera, a million killer images – part two of our great feature with seminal photographer, Dirk Behlau.



Dirk Behlau

94 **NORTHAMPTON TATTOO CONVENTION**  
It looked good beforehand... it was great when we got there!



COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: LEAH JUNG BY TINA PELECH

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# Sleeve Notes

twitter.com/skindeepmag  
www.facebook.com/tattoomagazine

ALL SUBMISSIONS TO SLEEVE NOTES GRATEFULLY RECEIVED. BE IT NEWS, AN EVENT, NEW MERCH, A STUDIO MOVE... WE'LL DO OUR VERY BEST TO LET EVERYBODY ELSE KNOW ABOUT IT TOO. EMAIL: [EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK](mailto:EDITOR@SKINDEEP.CO.UK) OR IF YOU WANT TO BE ARCHAIC ABOUT THE WHOLE AFFAIR: SKIN DEEP, 1 MARCHER COURT, SEALAND ROAD, CHESTER CH1 6BS. BRING IT.

## LATE VACANCY

### INKERS

A position has become available for a full-time tattooist at our award-winning Shop in Chertsey. Only serious, experienced people need apply. Please contact Jules on 07904 609575 or email [orrichards611@btinternet.com](mailto:orrichards611@btinternet.com).

### SHORT SLEEVES

### NEW STUDIO

76Inc have just opened their doors in Market Harborough with Burnie and Hannah as their lead artists. You can find them here:

76Inc Tattoo Studio, 64a St Marys Road, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 7DU.

Open: Tues-Sat, 9.30am-5.30pm

Tel: 01858 468173

[www.facebook.com/76IncTattoo](http://www.facebook.com/76IncTattoo)



### BODY JEWELLERY

Kingsley Ryan may be one of the original wholesale suppliers of body jewellery from way back in the '90s, but we can certainly say that their range is not stuck in the last century. This modest business packs a mean punch – great personality, passionate about its products, and nothing is ever too much trouble. For your body jewellery pleasure, please go to [www.kingsleyryan.co.uk](http://www.kingsleyryan.co.uk) or email [sales@kingsleyryan.co.uk](mailto:sales@kingsleyryan.co.uk).



## GNATTY TATTY

Tattoo lovers who hate to cover up their body art can now proudly display real tattoo designs any time and any place with international tattoo artists now collaborating on the designs produced by Tatty Clothing.

High street and high-end fashion labels have failed to allow individuals to be individual, but Tatty Clothing offers its customers an unashamed form of original expression, ensuring a product which has the meaning and emotion associated with ink on skin.

The beauty of the product is its scope to develop and grow with tattoo image, style and fashion, as well as the artist's improving ability as new designs come forth. In addition, all contributing artists will have links from the Tatty Clothing website to increase the number of hits on their own website.

Tatty Clothing is always looking to expand its range and encourage new talent. Aspiring artists are welcome to compete and be judged by the professionals for a place in the T-shirt hall of fame.

The founders, Neil and Jordi, both fans of ink, appreciate that too often the best tattoo work on people remains hidden as a result of social convention, so they are encouraging you to wear your heart on your sleeve... or on your T-shirt anyway.

Check out their work on [www.tattyclothing.co.uk](http://www.tattyclothing.co.uk) and browse through a first-class clothing collection.

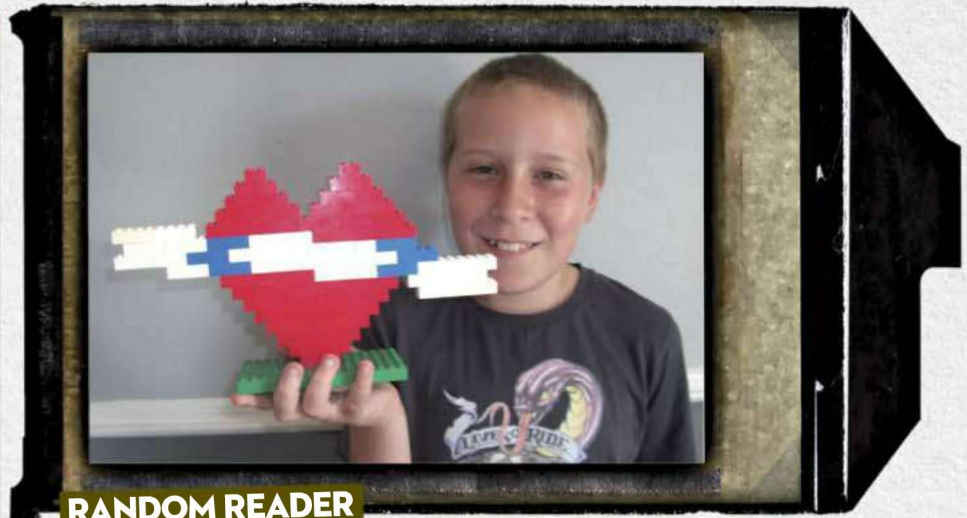


**SHORT SLEEVES****I AIN'T NO SAINT**

I Ain't No Saint tattoo studio opened earlier this year and is located in the sleepy village of Abotts Langley, which is very easy to reach from the M1, M25 and A1. The studio is home to Simon Templeman and also features various guest artists throughout the year. They're open Monday to Saturday 10-6, but please check the website at [www.iaintnosaint.com](http://www.iaintnosaint.com) before setting off, as they close for conventions sometimes. The studio number is 01923 262130 and email [info@iaintnosaint.com](mailto:info@iaintnosaint.com).

**AUCTION NEWS!**

An auction will be held on July 26 in Buzios Bar in Newport, Shropshire, for a great new cause – The Hidden War – aimed at combating stress. There is a facebook page up and running, which is [www.facebook.com/TheHiddenWarArtAuction](http://www.facebook.com/TheHiddenWarArtAuction) where they looking for donations of art and anything of value that can be raffled off. If you want to get in touch, you can either send a message through facebook or contact via the website, [www.doublektattoos.co.uk](http://www.doublektattoos.co.uk), email at [doubleks@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:doubleks@hotmail.co.uk), or ring the studio on 01952 820073. The guys out there are hoping to raise as much money as they can for a very deserving cause.

**RANDOM READER****PHOTO OF THE MONTH**

This is Sam Smith, aged 11. He rocks! His folks thought it would be cool to drop us a line and tell of his fascination with tattoos and desire to be a tattoo artist in the future. Mr & Mrs Smith (no relation to the Ed. – nor to the two assassins in the movie Mr & Mrs Smith either... at least we don't think so) are right behind him as well with the best advice in the world of "practice like mad". Meantime, Sam fills his time knocking Mum and Dad up tattoo designs and building Lego tattoo models like the cracker on display here. Watch this space... it might take a few years, but watch it anyway.

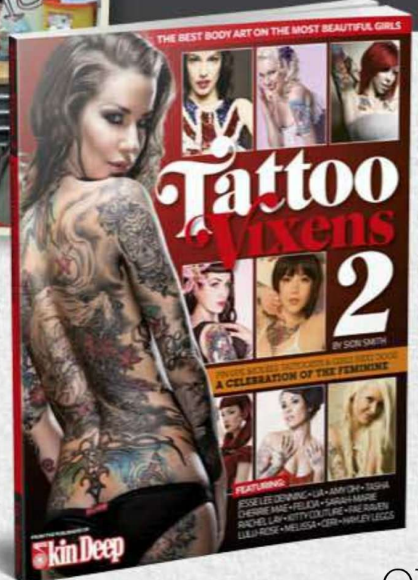
**PLANET 13 IS GO!**

Planet 13, the home of excellent body mods, custom work, black and greys, old skool, new skool, full colour, all body piercing, with its friendly atmosphere are ready to give your body the modification it deserves, first time every time. Planet 13 Tattoo and Piercing Studio, 97b Dunstable Street, Ampthill, Bedfordshire, MK45 2NG,

01525 405555, [planet13@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:planet13@hotmail.co.uk), Facebook, Planet Thirteen Ampthill.

**VIXENS 3 ON THE HORIZON**

Tattoo Vixens 3 is on the horizon! Models and photographers interested in taking part in this unique collection should drop an email to [editor@skindeep.co.uk](mailto:editor@skindeep.co.uk) with a few samples in the first instance. Bring it on...





HIT THE ROAD JACK

# THE CALL OF THE WILD

## MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL TATTOO SHOW

AUGUST 4-5, 2012



### WHAT ABOUT IT?

Well, it's been going for ten years and pretty much laid the groundwork for how modern, successful conventions are managed. And now that we've got our paws on it, we're injecting it with that groovy sparkle you all know and love that shines at our other shows like Tattoo Jam.

### OK... SO WHATCHA GOT?

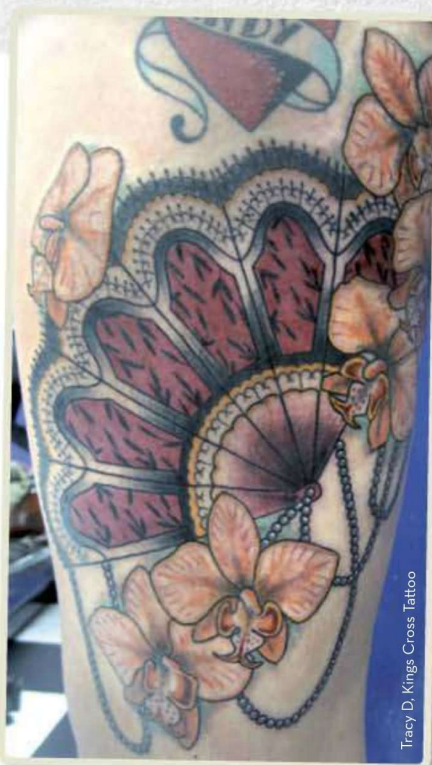
Well, Bez from TripleSix is onboard, Rachel Baldwin from MBA, Darren Wright from Lost Medusa, Tracy D from Kings Cross, Rae Pinx, Jo Harrison, Mark Poole, Craigy Lee, Louis Molloy, Rob Radcliffe, and Pedro Santos to kick off with. As I write this, there's a truckload of artists being leaked out day by day... check on the site for regular updates.

### POINT ME SOMEWHERE USEFUL.

Everything you need, from tickets to an ever-increasing artist list can be found here: [manchestertattooshow.com](http://manchestertattooshow.com).

### ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD?

Well you could always get yourself a weekend pass and blag yourself a limited edition T-shirt in the deal...



Tracy D. Kings Cross Tattoo

## MAIDEN CITY INK

AUGUST 24-26, 2012

### WHO'S ON THE BILL HERE?

Well, another cracking line-up featuring Jammes from Woody's Tattoo, Adam Caudill from Northern Soul, Julius Weber from Hungary, and... well... again, check on the official site at [www.maidencityink.com](http://www.maidencityink.com) for regular updates.

### WHERE THE HELL IS MAIDEN CITY ANYWAY?

Ah, now there's a good question! You'll find it at the Millennium Forum, Newmarket Street, Derry City, BT48 6EB – that's in Ireland for those who were too busy to go to school that day.

### WHAT'S DIFFERENT THIS YEAR?

Well, after a year off, they're back with a three-day show which everybody is looking forward to. It's also splendidly positioned across the bank holiday weekend, so if you haven't had enough bank holiday drinking madness for one year, this will be your last chance to live it up before Christmas kicks in.



Jammes, Woody's Tattoo



# 3RD MAIDEN CITY INK

## INTERNATIONAL TATTOO CONVENTION

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DERRY/LONDONDERRY, N.IRELAND

Live Music  
Tattoo Competition  
3PM Sunday  
Charity Raffle  
In Aid of Foyle Hospice

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Friday 12 Noon-9PM  
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Sunday 11am-9PM

AWARD WINNING ARTISTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE!

Bank Holiday Weekend

24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2012

All enquires to

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£8 PER DAY/ £20 3 DAY PASS



# Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

THE BLOGOSPHERE

## THE ART OF FELIDEUS

### DOMESTIC

June 29-July 2

#### INKFEST – A FESTIVAL OF TATTOO ART & ALTERNATIVE MUSIC

Woolacombe Bay Holiday Park  
Woolacombe, Devon, England  
[www.inkfest.co.uk](http://www.inkfest.co.uk)

June 30-July 1

#### BELFAST YEAR OF THE DRAGON

Hilton Belfast hotel  
4 Lanyon Place, Belfast, BT1 3LP  
United Kingdom  
[www.belfastyearofthedragon.com](http://www.belfastyearofthedragon.com)

July 7-8

#### DARE VALLEY INK 'N' IRON

Michael Sobell Sports Centre  
Aberdare, South Wales  
[www.darevalleyinkniron.co.uk](http://www.darevalleyinkniron.co.uk)

July 21-22

#### STATE OF THE ART TATTOO, BODY ART & ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE FESTIVAL

The Assembly Rooms, Derby  
[www.tattoo-2001.com](http://www.tattoo-2001.com)

July 28-29

#### PORTSMOUTH TATTOO CONVENTION

Portsmouth Guildhall  
Portsmouth, England  
[www.portsmouthtattooconvention.com](http://www.portsmouthtattooconvention.com)

August 4-5

#### MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL TATTOO SHOW

Manchester Central  
Tel: 01244 881888  
[www.manchestertattooshow.com](http://www.manchestertattooshow.com)

August 12

#### SOMERSET TAT2 CONVENTION

Bridgwater Sports & Social Club  
Bridgwater, Somerset  
Tel: 01278 439569

August 18-19

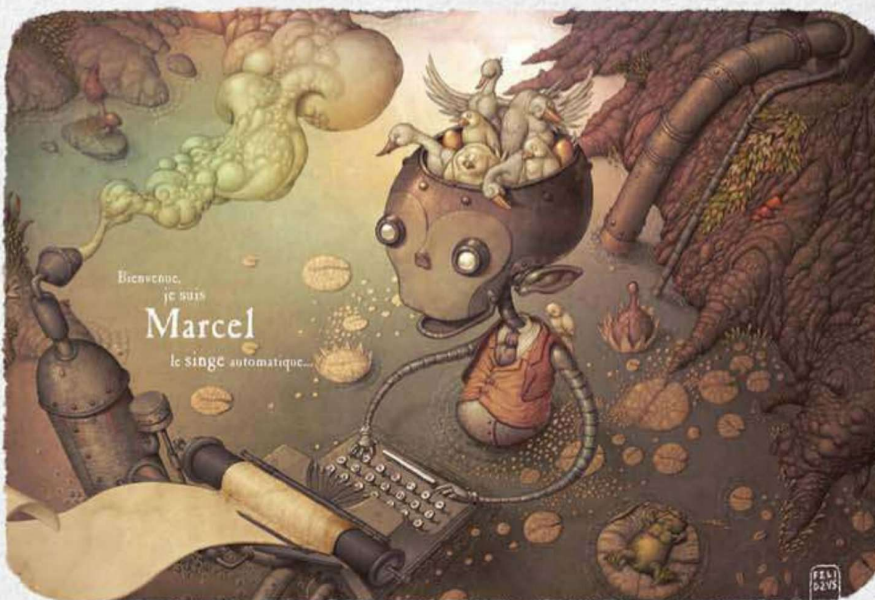
#### NORWICH BODYART FESTIVAL

St Andrews Hall, Norwich  
Norfolk, England  
[www.norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk](http://www.norwichbodyartfestival.co.uk)

August 24-26

#### MAIDEN CITY INK TATTOO CONVENTION

St Columb's Hall  
Orchard Street  
Derry City  
Northern Ireland  
Tel: Zac at Skin Art Tattoo, 02871 363076  
[maidencityink@aol.com](mailto:maidencityink@aol.com)



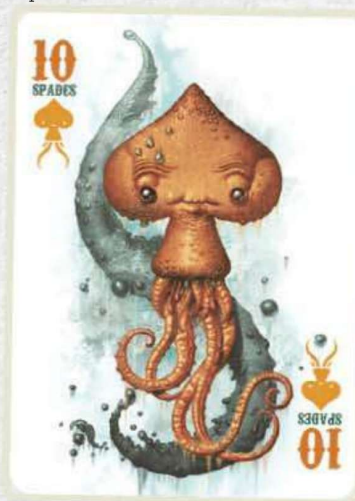
I first came across the art of Felideus about a year ago, but then forgot all about it... come full circle and I find myself here once again. As a precursor to a potentially bigger feature – somewhere at sometime – allow me to parade this fine, fine work in front of your face

To begin, you must pay the site a visit at [felideus.blogspot.co.uk](http://felideus.blogspot.co.uk) – sometimes, you come across art that stops you in your tracks and leaves you wanting to find out more, I certainly do. However, there is much here to be inspired by tattoo-wise – trains of thought that really should be picked up by artists, colour palettes so subtle that they could potentially start a whole new movement on skin. I'm no technician behind a needle, but those who appreciate the work of tattoo artists like Anabi will see the magic of Felideus for sure.

Felideus Bubastis – to give him his full name – is a digital artist from Spain, and his blog is beautiful. I wish the whole of the internet was like this. Those 'mustard tones' are very refreshing, and one look into his little

shop will have you reaching for the credit card for sure. Today, he works as a freelance storyteller and illustrator, but the grapevine tells me he is working on surreal steampunk graphic novel whilst living near a 'beautiful pine forest with his wife and thaumaturgic cat, Muppet'.

Anyway, enjoy. Check out his site and marvel while we do some more work behind the scenes...





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# Conventions

All details correct at time of going to press.

PAUL SWEENEY



## LAZING ON A SUNNY AFTERNOON IN THE... SUMMERTIME?

Before I get started on another one of my pun-laden tangents associated with what appears to be a recurrently unhealthy obsession with the appropriation of song titles and lyrics specifically from '60s, '70s, and '80s popular music, I would like to make an official apology...

"W-w-w-whaaat?" I hear you cry. Yes, an apology. And not just any old apology, but one of the utmost official nature. Now some of you may recall a few issues back, despite the apparent lack of summery weather anywhere else in the UK, with the exception of London

and some of its surrounding areas, I announced the official start of the British summertime in my somewhat prematurely entitled 'Hot in the City' article. Alas, the heat in the city (and everywhere else for that matter) was about as bloody dependable as, for want of a better comparison, the British summertime!

I declare I am a bona fide fool for assuming one day of sunshine in this country certifies

its existence for any greater period of time (or ever again for that matter). And so, upon sharing those flurries of foolish optimism with you, thus filling your vulnerable trust voids with false hope, writhing red backed and freckle faced in the heat of the moment, I must apologise. Let's look back on it as a warm up for the far more enduring summer months we have ahead of us, a liberal spring tickle!

You're right, this has taken a rather frisky ol' jaunt down 'Le Avenue de le Double Entendre'... must be all this sunshine we've been having (ha! I used past tense, which is my grammatical get out of jail free card; just in case the sun decides to take his hat off and take a massive

dump on it). Not that I've allowed myself to revel in the aforementioned fiery bringer of happiness, due to a soon-to-be-seen work commitment I've had to take extra special care over my appearance, which has meant I've spent the hottest weekend of the year so far in Wayfarers, covered head to toe in SPF 50 and avoiding direct sunlight like an old school vampire.

If anyone saw me successfully evading the UV rays in the cool,



I'VE SPENT THE HOTTEST WEEKEND OF THE YEAR SO FAR IN WAYFARERS, COVERED HEAD TO TOE IN SPF 50 AND AVOIDING DIRECT SUNLIGHT LIKE AN OLD SCHOOL VAMPIRE

dark sanctuary of the cinema (I went to see Dark Shadows, rather appropriate I thought...) this weekend, they would've been forgiven for thinking I was just another overly keen Burton fan/disorganised goth celebrating a bleated World Goth Day; which for those of you who were unaware was on May 22 this year and a scorching 25°C in London.

Oh British summertime, you do have a cruel sense of humour!

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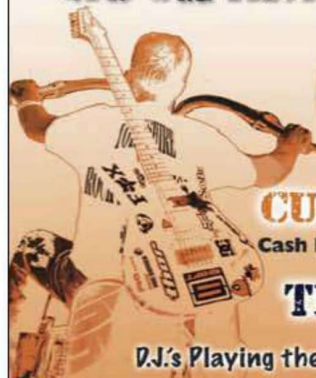
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## CHOOSING AN ARTIST

Tricky one this in just a couple of hundred words for a beginner. Simple as it gets in theory, slightly more complicated depending on what you want. Back in the day, all I ever wanted was a piece from Paul Booth, but the logistics of that, before I had even asked him if he would do it, proved to be more expensive and complicated than I was able to commit to at the time. Fact

remains though, you should aim as high as you possibly can regardless of where that may be.

These days, the chances of getting an appointment with an earth-shattering artist whose name your mum would recognise (if that's what you're after) without having to take a holiday to go along with it are far more likely, bearing in mind some of the giant sized shows we have on the circuit.

Those spots are likely to be swamped up very quickly indeed though once word gets out, so you'll always need to be ready to pounce.

With your feet firmly planted on the ground, you need to look objectively at what you actually want. This Paul Booth instance that I name above? Doesn't everybody go through a phase like that? I think they do, and it's always achievable – and these days there are

Skin Shots has a great artist list to begin your search.

The one thing that all of us here agree on, is that you should never walk into a tattoo studio with a picture from another artist and ask them to replicate it. It's not fair on the original artist. That said, it's perfectly feasible to ask your chosen one to develop the theme in their own style. Even if you're "only after some script", you should scope your artist well.



Lianne Moule.

## DON'T CONFINE YOURSELF TO YOUR OWN HIGH STREET – THE UK IS A PRETTY SMALL PLACE REALLY AND ANYWHERE IS WITHIN A DAYS TRAVEL

dozens and dozens of artists of the same calibre that'll get the results you want.

If you're looking to get work locally, our advice is to choose cleverly. Check around your local area for a start and get scanning potential artist portfolios. Don't confine yourself to your own high street though – the UK is a pretty small place really and anywhere is within a days travel. If you can't find a style that you're into within the pages of Skin Deep or Skin Shots, you're either going to be a hard client to please or not looking properly. The back pages of

Text might look simple to lay on, but for it to look great still takes no small amount of skill to get something done that will still look as good next year as it does tomorrow.

Finally – or as final as it gets in a nutshell article – if you choose right, you'll soon learn the true meaning of loyalty. There's something great about having the same artist work on your body time after time, and that feeling is priceless. But don't forget to leave some room for those special occasions when Paul Booth really does show up down your street. 🌻



# COLLECTING

What makes a tattoo collection? Well, I'm sure if we asked somebody mathematically inclined, a collection consists of more than three of something. And a collection is normally themed as well, but that's not always the case with tattoos. You can be quite an authentic collector with pieces by multiple artists. The collection is made into a collection by having just one thing in common. You.

There are two trains of thought with collecting. If you're really wise, it's conceivable that you could plan the whole affair out and instigate that plan – if you've got a good stack of cash, it's even possible to get it done quickly too. In those circumstances, this

somebody's portfolio that you've never heard of before? Free spots this afternoon... priceless! Hooking up with an artist from abroad who is coming over and wants to lay that piece down you've been talking about for the longest time? Just as priceless. Hanging out at a local studio and chewing over ideas with the artist there until one day you come in and find it's all drawn up and ready to roll? You get the picture...

The great thing about a tattoo collection is that you can practically trace your life through it. You'll never forget your first, who did it and where, and you're not likely to forget any of the others either, which is more than can be said

HANGING OUT AT A SHOW? SEEN  
SOMEBODY'S PORTFOLIO THAT YOU'VE  
NEVER HEARD OF BEFORE? FREE SPOTS  
THIS AFTERNOON... PRICELESS

is probably not the page for you to be reading.

The other train of thought is more likely, and is the road that most of us take because it's convenient, fun, and spontaneous. And that is to get another tattoo added to the collection when and wherever you feel like it.


Hanging out at a show? Seen

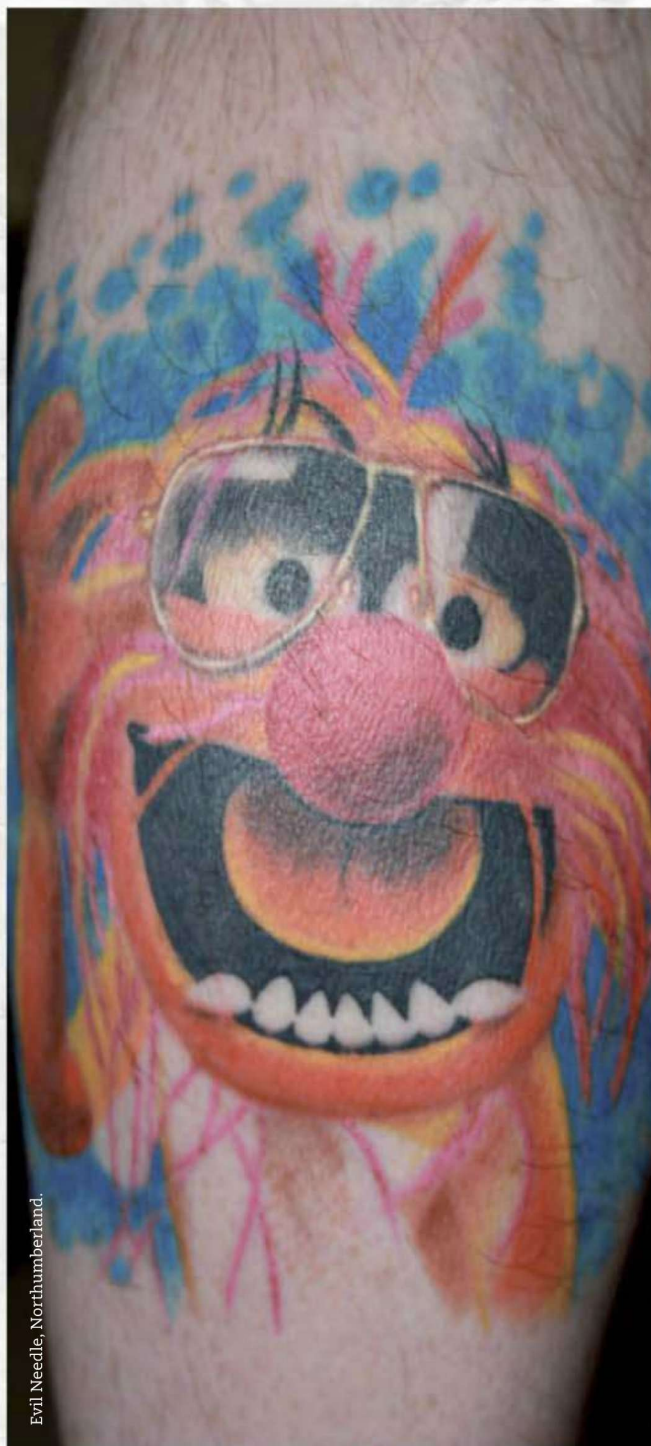
for some things when people ask "who was your first". Even the tattoos that you got covered-up will be remembered fondly eventually.

But then, there are also people – many of them – who don't view owning a lot of tattoos as collecting, and that's fine too. The term 'collector' is bandied about far too freely now to have the

meaning it once did. And if you happen to research tattoo collecting, you'll find that many have tried to define what this actually consists of, often making bad comparisons such as how 'people learn their own particular brand of deviance', and how 'thieves learn their trade from other thieves, so tattoo collectors learn

how to interpret tattoos from those who wear them'.

This is looking at it far too deeply at this early stage of your journey. It will ultimately be up to you as to whether you view yourself as 'having tattoos' or 'tattooed' – and by then, you should have figured it out for yourself... 





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THE NEXT

## 1,000 MILES...

My next two conventions are both taking place in Germany, the first in a small town called Plauen in east Germany, which is in its first year, and the second in the larger city of Frankfurt in western Germany, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year... two shows, two polar opposites!

organised working at the Plauen tattoo convention only a week before the show, last minute to say the least.

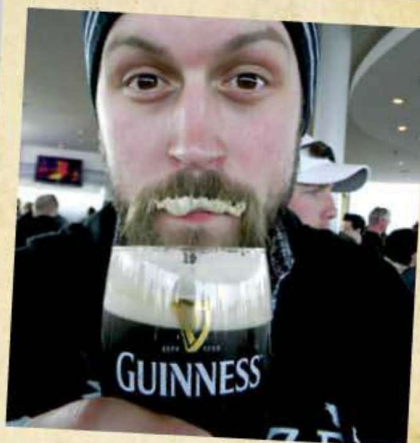
The organisers had a problem with their website and email, so I hadn't even had a confirmation, just a short facebook message saying "there is a booth available, see you there." So I had slight reservations about the show as I like being organised. As we get closer to our destination, we drive further and further into

fields, farmland and through small (very small) towns, and I start wondering where on earth (or in Germany) Plauen actually is! However, we break into the outskirts of the town and the buildings start getting higher and denser. The architecture here is beautiful; a lot of the buildings have ornate stone carvings and murals of angels, animals, cherubs and faces in the brickwork.

We arrive at the convention to set up and quickly realise

nobody really speaks English. We are directed over to Bobbi, a large chap who looks rather intimidating. I walk over and introduce myself, a warming expression comes over his face as he proclaims: "Ahhhh, Craigy Lee! We are so happy you made it, please come, I have a booth for you here. There is food and if you need anything else just come and find me." And with that short sentence, all my reservations fade away as we are made very welcome indeed.

The show is in its first year and as such, is quite small. However I like that as it means I have the chance to walk around and see everything – most artists are local, as is the entertainment; a local marching band make a couple of performances throughout the weekend, and there are live bands



Enjoying a fresh Guinness.

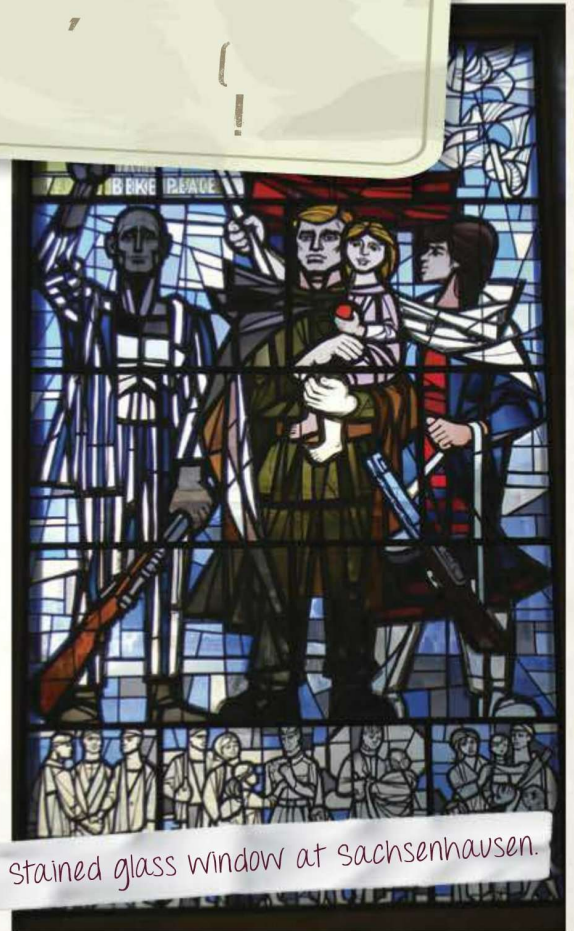




Plaven Convention



Heaven of colour at Plaven.



stained glass window at Sachsenhausen.

and a freak show by Lord Insanity. Saturday is pretty busy with many of the younger crowd coming over to talk and get tattooed. Keen to practice their English, many proudly tell me "we love to visit London, we go over at least once a year." Sunday starts off a little slower and picks up in the afternoon, ending with the tattoo competitions. I really enjoyed the weekend – a small town show with a personal feel made us very welcome, the organisers, artists and public were all very endearing, and it gave me a real feel of what east Germans are really like.

After such a warm and pleasant weekend, we drive up north of Berlin to Oranienburg to visit Sachsenhausen, which for those of you who don't know, was a World War II concentration

camp; it is now a monument and museum to the memory of all those who died. The museum displays many Nazi posters, which as art, are very bold and visually striking. There are three very ornate stained glass windows in the entrance and written accounts of Jewish artists who were spared their lives in exchange for work painting and designing propaganda posters. Most buildings are still intact or have been rebuilt, so you can walk around and get a real feel for what went on. The sun is shining and the 'camp' is surrounded by grass and green trees. On such a tranquil day, it's pretty hard to imagine what went on here. We take it all in before we drive across to Frankfurt.

We arrive at a monstrous convention hall and realise

that this weekend will be the complete opposite of what we experienced in Plaven. Frankfurt has been running for 20 years and grows bigger each time; for those of you who haven't been, this convention is huge! Loads of international artists travel to work the show (I won't even start naming names as I could fill my word count with that alone), and it has become a cornerstone of the European convention calendar and a highlight in many peoples' lives 🌸



Sachsenhausen

diaries. As I wander amongst the crowds like a lost puppy, I do manage to find a few friendly faces, Brent McGowan from New Zealand is working on a whole aisle dedicated to maori and handpoked tattooing. There is a large 'backstage' area where artists can escape the crowds, get some free food and drinks, and recharge. I walk up and down and up and down the aisles, but I think there are still booths I missed over the

1993

weekend. Due to the sheer volume of people wandering around, it made it very hard to have a quick look around in between tattoos. But despite the huge, impersonal feel of the hall and size of the event, the organisers did manage to get around to every single booth, thanking every artist for attending in person, and give everyone a small china



me working hard at Frankfurt.



Poster signing for the Frankfurt 20th anniversary.

Frankfurt



pig to celebrate the show's 20th anniversary. An original show poster from 1993 was also taken to each booth, signed by each artist and presented to organiser, Tommy, at the after show party. Not every convention is for every artist and some people complain Frankfurt is too big and impersonal, however I enjoyed the show and meeting new people as I always do, but I have to say, I am more excited for my next weekend in Ireland and getting back to talking fluent English!

I first visited Ireland what feels like a lifetime ago, so the opportunity to go and work a convention in the small

coastal town of Donegal was very welcome.

We took the early morning ferry from Holyhead and arrived at the ferry port of Dublin and spent the day walking around and seeing the sights. One thing I noticed before we even parked up was the amount of tattoo studios. They seem to be everywhere like cheap fast food joints, but the coolest shop we found was definitely Classic Ink, in Temple Bar. The shop had a real old school feel to it – hand-painted shop signs and windows, and walls covered in flash that gave a nostalgic feeling when you walked in... this is what tattoo shops are suppose to be



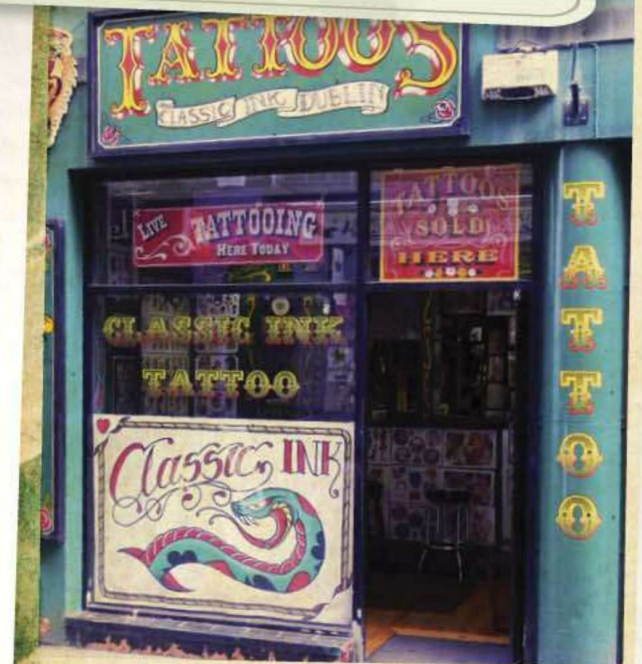


like in a back street off the main road surrounded by bars and pubs. Getting tattooed should be an adventure, an experience – who wants to get tattooed in a place that looks like a hair salon?

We finished walking the lanes and cobbled streets and then headed for the Guinness brewery, I think it's a God-given right that you have to drink Guinness in Dublin. And the freshest Guinness you are ever going to drink is most definitely in the brewery itself. After indulging in the black stuff, it was time to drive to the west coast and to Donegal where the Northwest Tattoo Show is being held. The show was formerly known as the Killybegs Tattoo Convention, but due to the previous venue closing down, they moved the show to the next town and the Abbey Hotel. Donegal is a

small fishing town surrounded by beautiful scenery and coastline. The show is held in a nice ballroom in the back of the hotel overlooking the water and just across the road from Zombie Dolls Tattoo Parlour who are organising the event.

It's probably the smallest show I have ever worked, but that gives it a nice friendly feel. More like a party or a gathering of friends than a soulless convention held in a big exhibition centre. There are around 30 booths, but the size doesn't mean it's just locals. There are artists from Canada, Spain Finland and Poland as well as all over Ireland. The show starts at 6pm on Friday and rolls along a little slow. However as I learn very quickly, the Irish like to drink and party late into the evening (or early hours of the morning), meaning things get going a little



*Classic Ink in Temple Bar.*

later. Saturday and Sunday roll along and we have fun talking and hanging out with some of the local artists and enjoy some of the local food, including the best sausages I have ever eaten! Sometimes these shows go by very quickly, and sadly my week in Ireland shoots past all too fast, but I shall definitely be coming back for one of the bigger shows. 🐾

*The crowds at Frankfurt.*





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 B13 8EH

### Appointments 0121

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DRAG with interruptions by Mr Smith Manicks Productions

The story of DRAG and their seemingly inseparable music and tattoos, started six years ago. Heather and

Velma met and started their musical and personal relationship in April 2006, and just four weeks later asked Helen to tattoo them a matching design of their guitars: "We bonded over the crazy story of how we met as a couple, and Helen was surprised – and maybe a little wary – that we were demonstrating a 'lifetime commitment' so early on!"

"We were pleased to have met a good female tattooist, but we had no idea that Helen would have such a massive influence on us as a couple and as a band! When Helen made the move to Gung Ho! in Moseley, we became regulars at the shop, and have had bi-monthly appointments for the last five years."

Helen also hand-painted a guitar for the band with original artwork, a one-of-a-kind piece and we are really proud to play it. "We also used the microphone tattoo she did on Heather as inspiration for our T-shirt logo – again, the tattoo style of the artwork reflects our love of music and tattoo art."

A lot of DRAG's songs discuss the idea of body image – their latest music video, 'Hollywood Waist' explores this in detail and deals with the lengths people will go to in order to achieve perfection. "We have predominantly discussed things like self-harm and eating disorders, both of which are featured to their extreme in the video. Tattoos are another way of achieving 'perfection', as many of



Stephen Turner Photography

I'M A FIRM BELIEVER THAT THE ARTIST WILL GIVE YOU THEIR BEST WORK WHEN GIVEN CREATIVE CONTROL, AND I FEEL SO FORTUNATE TO HAVE THE RELATIONSHIP WHERE I CAN GIVE THAT FREEDOM

the readers will associate with.

"Si joined us on drums in February and it was amazing to finally find someone who shared our vision and not only understood, but embraced the messages behind the songs. Si loves his ink as well, which bonds us even more, and helps create a fantastic image. Si's newest work comes from Birmingham Ink, and we feel proud to represent the local tattoo scene onstage."

## HEATHER:

"I feel like my tattoos represent me

as a person – you can see the things that drive and inspire me on my skin, before you even talk to me. I would say that music and surfing are two of my biggest passions, so it's no surprise that I have a sleeve dedicated to each.

"I am a bright, outgoing person, and I love colour. The inspiration for my surfing sleeve was the artwork of surf-artist Drew Brophy – I took Helen a load of his posters and surfboard designs, and she took my ideas on board to create a new spin that suited her as an artist and 🍷"









**HELEN BROWN:  
THE TATTOOIST  
(GUNG HO!  
TATTOO,  
BIRMINGHAM)**

"Tattooing Heather and Velma has always been different! When I started tattooing them they would have small, one-shot tattoos, now it's always a big project. Velma's horror themed designs were great fun to do and research. I will never tire of tattooing horrible creatures! Heather's arms are a reflection of her, and a passion for music. We tried to keep images that meant something to Heather. I even squeezed a likeness of Velma in the mix! I always look forward to seeing these ladies, and I am still never sure what we will be tattooing next."

we'll be working on – I'm a firm believer that the artist will give you their best work when given creative control, and I feel so fortunate to have the relationship where I can give her that freedom."

**VELMA:**

"Both my sleeves are influenced by my love of all things dark and fantastical. My interests in art, music and culture have often been based around the macabre as well as the surreal. I've had a passion for the horror genre of film from a young age, watching a multitude of films with my father who introduced me to the classics of film-making very early on.

"My horror sleeve morphs many of my favourite films and their characters together, drawing from old to new. Portraits of Dracula, Aliens, Female Cenobite from

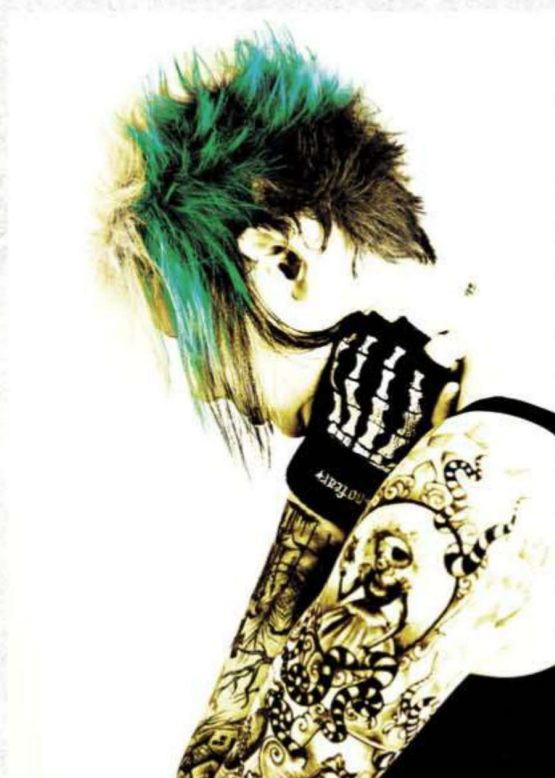
would work as a tattoo. So many people stop me and comment on the vividness of the colours.

"My black and grey sleeve represents all that I am as a musician, including my experiences and influences over my life. They range from a portrait of my Grandfather, a professional musician – who I never met – but my family tell me there are uncanny musical resemblances between us, as well as references to my classical background of playing the French Horn; to some of the musicians who inspire my on-stage performances like P!nk, The Dresden Dolls, and Freddie Mercury.

"I have two pieces that directly reference DRAG: 'Trust me, this is what I need' are lyrics from one of our songs, which refers to needing music, the band and needing the tattoos to complete me; and my

microphone that I perform with. The biggest talking point of my sleeve has to be the portrait of Velma on my forearm; Helen did acknowledge that it was weird to be tattooing a portrait of someone she knows well, but I think Velma is potentially my biggest musical influence because without meeting her and getting involved with DRAG, I wouldn't have found the confidence to realise my musical dreams of performing onstage like I do now.

"One of the main things that makes me so loyal to Helen, apart from her being a fantastic tattoo artist, is that I trust her 100 percent. When planning a big piece, I send her loads of reference material, but leave it completely up to her what she chooses to do with it. There have been many times that I will arrive not knowing what section







*Hellraiser* and a Nurse from *Silent Hill* make up the main images which are to be intertwined with Geiger-style bio-mechanical parts. Other aspects have supported this horror theme with a portrait of Marilyn Manson and bizarrely, a Lady Gaga monster claw – but very in keeping with the horror theme because of their dark visual style as musicians – something that influences my music, and in turn a lot of DRAG's dark imagery. The final aspect of this sleeve is my tribute to the late Alexander McQueen, representing his designs presented on a disfigured mannequin.

"My other sleeve draws together my other love of film and art, Tim Burton. This sleeve takes a huge number of early Burton sketches and designs of his characters and concepts that were either translated into film or remained as sketches. This arm is a blend of surreal landscapes and oddball characters that really sums up my interests, all tied together by classic Burton black and white pattern. The one piece on this arm that sticks out from this theme is my portrait of Charles I. This is in a 17th century lithograph-style depicting Charles after the execution, exposing his neck, drawing attention to the violent nature of his death. I love the way people are often confused by the

way I look and my interests in history, its like 'you cant look like that, be in a punk band and like history!'

"Helen and I have really enjoyed constructing these two pretty dark, horror themes, and researching all the aspects has been so interesting.

initials are of somebody who, in the past, gave me the strength to seek help when I was struggling. They supported me through the biggest change of my life, so it was only right that they be included. The same goes for the cross – I wanted to show that religion also played

I LOVE THE WAY PEOPLE ARE OFTEN CONFUSED BY THE WAY I LOOK AND MY INTERESTS IN HISTORY, ITS LIKE 'YOU CANT LOOK LIKE THAT, BE IN A PUNK BAND AND LIKE HISTORY!'

We share a lot of interests, and often find ourselves getting really excited discussing the prospect of the next piece. I would take images and concepts to Helen, but she would be so fundamental in designing and working the images into workable tattoos that would work on me and support each other. I have a huge amount of respect and trust in Helen and am more than happy for her to have the freedom to work totally free of resource materials, which is where the tattoo on my foot emerged, a portrait of a delicate woman's face, with tentacles and eyes in a Medusa style. The only instruction here was 'do whatever you want' and it's amazing."

**SI:**

"My tattoos are all about the things I've conquered in my life so far. A permanent reminder of what I've been through to get to where I am today, but more importantly to never look back at life in a negative way. My most noticeable piece is one that covers my front, showing how music has played such an important role in my life. This piece symbolises my ongoing fight against an eating disorder that I've had for my entire adult life. The

such an important part. The three angels lifting the skeleton was taken from Avenged Sevenfold's self-titled fourth album. I love music and I love dark sketch-like imagery used on that album. Being a massive fan of Avenged Sevenfold, it felt right that I used it especially when it symbolises salvation. Their track, 'Afterlife' was one that summed up my waking up to reality and asking for help. The line "Please Die Ana" right at the bottom is taken from Silverchair's 'Open Fire (Ana's Song)' which is a beautifully haunting song I really connected with.

"From my spinal column (by Frank at Blue Pearl, Manchester), which represents all the people who have stood up and supported me over the years, to my forearm muscles showing through ripped skin, I love the idea of playing around with interactivity and meaning to create something that is truly unique and individual to me. My current piece in progress (at Birmingham Ink) is a full sleeve which will represent all the amazing things that I have experienced in the last three years, such as reconnecting with those that I lost along the way and being reborn through music."



# The eyes of a stranger

PART TWO

In the second part of our interview with Dirk Behlau, we showcase some more of his incredible work from the road and dig into what life is like for a pro photographer a little bit more than some pros may like...

It's not often you come across people who are truly satisfied with what they do in life.

I query whether there are other areas Dirk might like to explore as he pushes on in his career? Does working for National Geographic magazine appeal to his sensibilities at all, or is there anywhere he would like to take his talents that seem to be out of reach at the moment?

"Actually I am pretty satisfied that I'm mainly shooting within the Kustom Kulture scene at the moment – hot rods, custom bikes, pin-ups, tattoos, rock 'n' roll, and so on. That covers most of the stuff I love, but I think I would like to do more extreme sports film and photography, like skydiving, surfing, extreme skiing, bmx, big vertrap and high-jumps – all that crazy weird shit. But let's see what happens... if someone approaches me with an interesting project, I am the last one to refuse!"

Thinking along the same kind of lines, I ask Dirk to consider whether the majority of photographers need to think less about what they are shooting and more about being part of the



experience. After all, when you get a great photographer, they can tell a whole story without the need for any words to describe the situation, even if that's not something that happens often.

"Being within the action and feeling the heat is essential in my opinion. When I see, for example, soccer photographers

with their ultra-zooms and tons of equipment around their neck, I always feel sorry for them. Shooting from the borders of the field without being part of the action is not my cup of tea. Of course, you can't run with the camera behind a football player, but that would be nothing I would like to do on a regular 🙄



## IF YOU COULD BE INVISIBLE FOR ONE DAY WITH YOUR CAMERA...

I would go and shoot famous people, just to see how they act when they don't know that they are being photographed – maybe in the White House. I am really interested in people and looking behind the blinds to see the 'real me/ them'.

## WHAT TALENT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE?

Drawing – I won a drawing competition at the age of six, but that doesn't count. Drawing like a pro takes a lot of experience and talent.



I BELIEVE THAT YOU  
NEED TO BE YOUR OWN  
BIGGEST FAN IN THE  
FIRST PLACE. YOU NEED  
TO LOVE WHAT YOU DO.  
IT'S ALL ABOUT LOVE  
AND PASSION





basis. Good shots grab you with the emotions of the scene. You immediately feel the desire to see and know more about the theme. Unfortunately, that doesn't really happen a lot to me. I think lots of photographers don't have a real passion for what they shoot, they do it for the money first, just as a job. But I don't want to judge anybody. I believe that you need to be your own biggest fan in the first

IF SOMEONE APPROACHES ME  
WITH AN INTERESTING PROJECT, I  
AM THE LAST ONE TO REFUSE!



place. You need to love what you do. It's all about love and passion."

I'm thinking to myself that with technology surging forward at a pretty relentless pace – and I know we discussed this earlier, so forgive me for coming back to it again – but am I the only one who can see a day coming when the iPhone will get so good that you can just get on a plane with that in your pocket and produce results as good as a







**WHAT OR WHO IS THE GREATEST LOVE OF YOUR LIFE?**

My family: my girl, my daughter, my son, my parents. Without them I would be nothing.

**WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST FEAR?**

To lose my family.

**SOMETHING THAT IS OVERRATED?**

Can I say 'Nikon'? Har har...

pro can get from pro-equipment? In fact – are we closer than we think?

“My theory is actually that most people could use the latest iPhone instead of buying a DSRL, but it's a psychological thing. If I took my iPhone to, let's say, a bike shooting with good available light – and we had all the circumstances that would make it easy to take a good picture – the client would ask why I can't afford a good camera.

They would just think that I'm not worth the money they paid, even though they couldn't really judge if the results had been shot with a DSRL or an iPhone.

“And lots of people can't see a difference, especially when you can use all those filters of a modern photo app. I do know photographers who sold their pro-equipment and use only the iPhone – and their shots are better

magazine can reduce your great work to a pile of shit without even thinking about it. As magazines are having to think about margins and production values in what's become an environment that is changing daily; I wonder if Dirk is personally looking forward to magazines moving towards digital formats. We look at Skin Deep on the iPad and the definition pours out of great photography and it

I EVEN KNOW PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO SOLD THEIR PRO-EQUIPMENT AND USE ONLY THE IPHONE – AND THEIR SHOTS ARE BETTER THAN FROM OTHER PHOTOGRAPHERS WITH A BIG GUN

than from other photographers with a big gun too. So I think the future is already here, but because of the 'bigger is better' idea, the psychological element won't change in the near future.”

That's something that I think we should all contemplate as we sit here reading what is essentially an art magazine. So much of what we perceive as being artistic or not artistic is wrapped up in these psychological elements, and yet, in the hands of somebody wrapped in the love of what they are trying to achieve, great things can happen.

Flipping through some magazines we have lying around, I open the stable door on how, regardless of how good your photography is, a careless

looks beautiful. There has to come a time when you have to hand over your work and trust that they will do the right thing with it.

“True. A bad layout can easily ruin your photos or make them look cheap. I had – and have – that experience quite often. You see the results and think, 'OK, not bad, but not good either!'

“I have a strong graphic design background, but you can't do everything on your own. I always loved reading a stylish pdf magazine; I did my own lifestyle magazine called 'sceyelines' ten years ago – sceyelines.pixeleye.de – before the big rush of flash-based flipbook magazines came about. There have been some great digital magazines in the last decade and







**WHAT ITEM DO YOU WISH YOU HAD DESIGNED?**

The iPhone.

**IF YOU COULD HAVE LUNCH WITH ANYONE WHO IS FAMOUS WHO WOULD IT BE?**

Lemmy Kilminster.

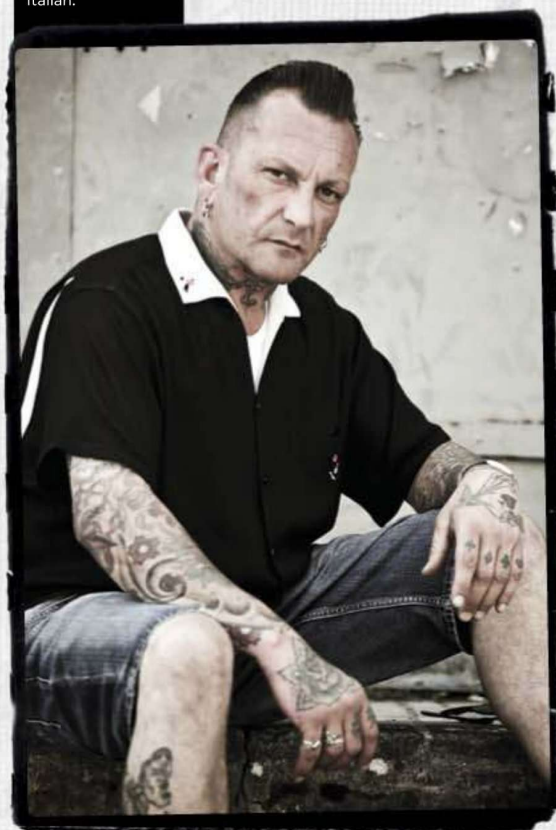
**WHERE YOU'LL FIND ME ON A FRIDAY NIGHT AT 9 P.M.?**

Probably partying with friends at a car show, tattoo convention, concert – pretending to work!

**FIRST THING YOU WOULD DO IF YOU WON THE LOTTERY?**

Depending on the amount, I would buy a house/ houses in Germany, a beach house in California, a skiing hut in the mountains, and if there was still money left, I'd also buy a house in Italy since my girl is half Italian.

it's great that you can read them on the iPad as well nowadays, but I still prefer a printed one. The possibilities of digital magazines are still in their infancy. Interactive things like animated adverts, videos, and photo zooming, still need to come to most of them.



IT'S ALWAYS KIND OF AN EXPERIENCE WHEN YOU HAND OVER YOUR PHOTOS TO A MAGAZINE AND SEE WHAT THEY MAKE OUT OF IT. YOU NEED TO TRUST THEM AND YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN

"It's always kind of an experience when you hand over your photos to a magazine and see what they make out of it. You need to trust them and you never know what will happen. There are few good magazines, and lots of average stuff and bad ones. I always try to pick out the good ones because my work will be used in the right way – and that's the stuff you show around."

I know a lot of people like to surf the web – not necessarily to pick out new ideas, but more out of a genuine interest in what other people are making of the world in their own particular fields. Is that a typical Dirk kind of thing to do?

"Not really. I check on facebook what artists I like are doing, but actually not other photographers. I like a few, like Tim Sutton and Viva van Story. I'm more into illustrators like hydro74, Palehorse Design and Felix LaFlamme to name a few – and independent movies, underground graphic design, and things like that.

"Inspiration comes from a lot of directions, but I hardly ever do I think 'wow, this is stuff I want to do as well'. I love what other artists do, but I never copy an idea, because I want my own version of it. That's useless if somebody else already did it. I just want to express myself with my own ideas."

And to wrap up... what is there still left for Dirk to do? Go on tour with Aerosmith? Bed yourself in with a circus for a month? Is there something he would like to almost 'join' to milk it dry of the experience?

"I would maybe change Aerosmith to Motörhead or Metallica! If these guys would take me on tour and would let me do whatever I want, it would be a great experience. But bands of this size would never let you do it your own way, so I don't think it would fulfil my expectations. So I'd rather, like, join a spaceship crew and walk on the moon." 🚀



# RUDE STUDIOS

**Lee Rudeboy Reynolds** (Tattoo Artist) • **Lnz Steger Cavanagh** (Tattoo Artist)  
**Col The Gent Green** (Tattoo Artist) • **Michael Gibson** (Tattoo Artist) • **Danny Mass**  
(Desk Jockey) • **Justin Rockett** (Apprentice) • **Sam Myers** (Owner/Body Mod Specialist/Scarification)

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FROM THE PUBLISHING OF SKIN DEEP MAGAZINE

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\*\* WHEN A 1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION IS PURCHASED.





# THE WIDTH OF A CIRCLE

As ever, stumbling across things you love by accident is far more pleasing than when somebody puts it beneath your nose and tells you how great they thought it was. Such is the case with Math. Evil genius or brilliant scientist? That's for you to decide... make the discovery



**THE CIRCLE**  
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Normally, with a look into an artist's life, it's good to begin with a grounding in that person – possibly to get you more acquainted with them and endear them to you. It struck me that in some instances – this one particularly – that's not totally necessary. If ever there was a man who preferred to let his work do the talking, it's Math. So we dispensed with the pleasantries and got down to the very important business of style and substance.

With an apprenticeship in Toulouse, I'm curious as to whether there was any big difference to what you would have expected to doing one here in the UK.

"Yes, I did apprentice in Toulouse and I can only tell from what I've

learnt since that it was what you'd expect from an apprenticeship. The way I see it, all traditional apprenticeships are the same – you learn the basics; setting up, breaking down, cleaning the shop, etc. So fundamentally the basics are universal regardless of location. Apprenticeships are supposed to keep you focused, teach you to respect the industry and ensure that you are there for the right reasons. There are obviously exceptions though.

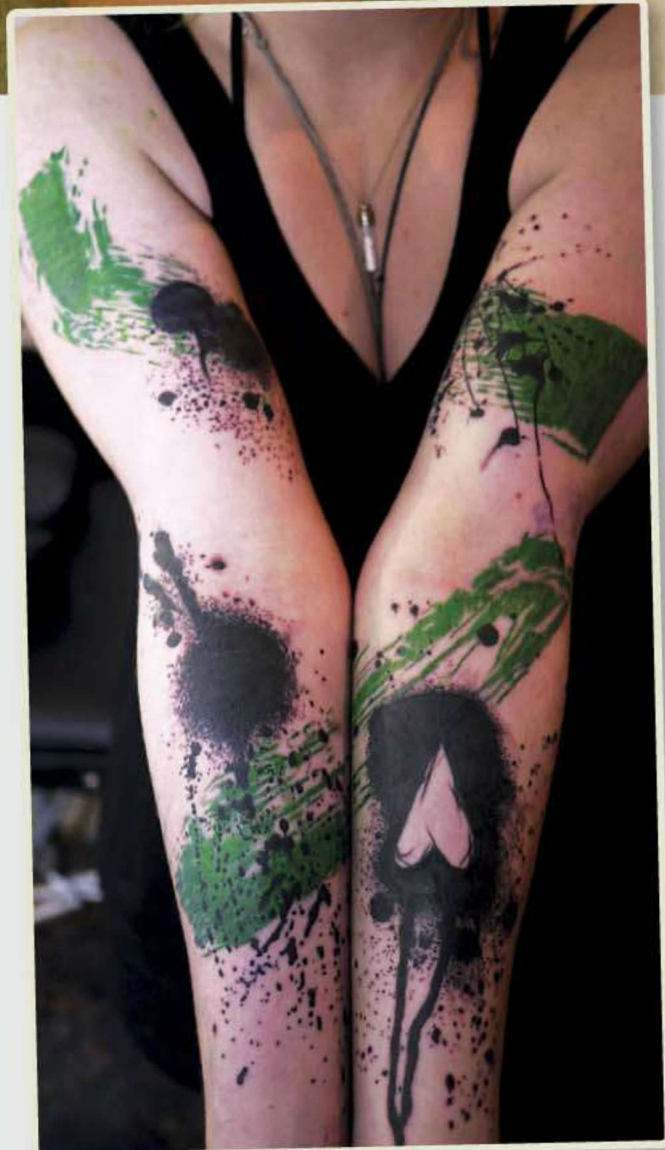
"I was taught that, as a tattooist you have to be able to do all basic styles, so you should be able to do everything and anything within reason. For example, if somebody came to me and asked for something which is not my forte, then I would rather hand them over to somebody else. Luckily at The Circle, we have an



eclectic range of tattooists who specialise in all styles. As for 'my style'; if people come to me for a tattoo, then they have usually seen my work, and I am fortunate in that people trust my style and judgement so they let me have free reign."

Do you find that you get bundled in with the 'Art Brut' tag? Personally, I think that tag is a





IF SOMEBODY CAME TO ME AND ASKED  
FOR SOMETHING WHICH IS NOT MY FORTE,  
THEN I WOULD RATHER HAND THEM OVER TO  
SOMEBODY ELSE

misnomer, but when it's used, you always know what 'sort' of thing people are talking about. Would you agree with that? Are you happier for your style to remain undefined and for it simply to be 'one of your pieces'?

"I don't like to be labeled or to be categorised in that way, but I appreciate that people need some kind of reference and to put labels on something to describe what I do. They add me to the Art Brut tag because that's maybe what I show the most. I don't care if it's 'undefined' or 'one of my pieces'; I'm just doing my job."

Would I be way off course by saying that Yann Black's legacy plays something of a part in your own genesis?

"Of course he plays a part. He started the whole heavy graphic blackwork style 15 years ago, and that was an eye opener for how that style can be effective and work

as a tattoo. So he opened a path to a different style of tattooing. What I do is definitely different, but he was obviously an influence."

Does your style owe something to graffiti? That's something I read somewhere, but that seems rather simplistic – and probably comes from some of the 'running ink' people can see. Is there actually and influence or is it – as I think – a simple development of style.

"I always liked graffiti, particularly stencil work, so when I started tattooing I looked into it further, but it wasn't really a development or progression, as I was using the 'running ink' elements from the start. I felt that it would make the tattoo flow better while contrasting the heavy blackwork with the negative spaces."

Here's a good question for you – it can probably be aimed at many, but I'll ask you – whenever I begin 🍌



to write, the more absorbed I get in the piece I'm working on, the more my brain relaxes and develops other ideas on totally different projects; is that something you find also? What I'm trying to get at here, is to nail down inspiration. Does it come from a solid source or is it, as I like to think, a matter of swimming in the pool so often that things just arrive... a connective flicking of switches in your head? The more you use it, the more worn those

paths become to these places...

"It's not a case of flicking switches, but I have base influences which I always return to. I'm always open to, and looking for, new influences. It's important to be receptive to other things, and try to incorporate new things. Sometimes I don't realise when influences or inspiration have crept in until I look back at a piece and recognise an element in it."

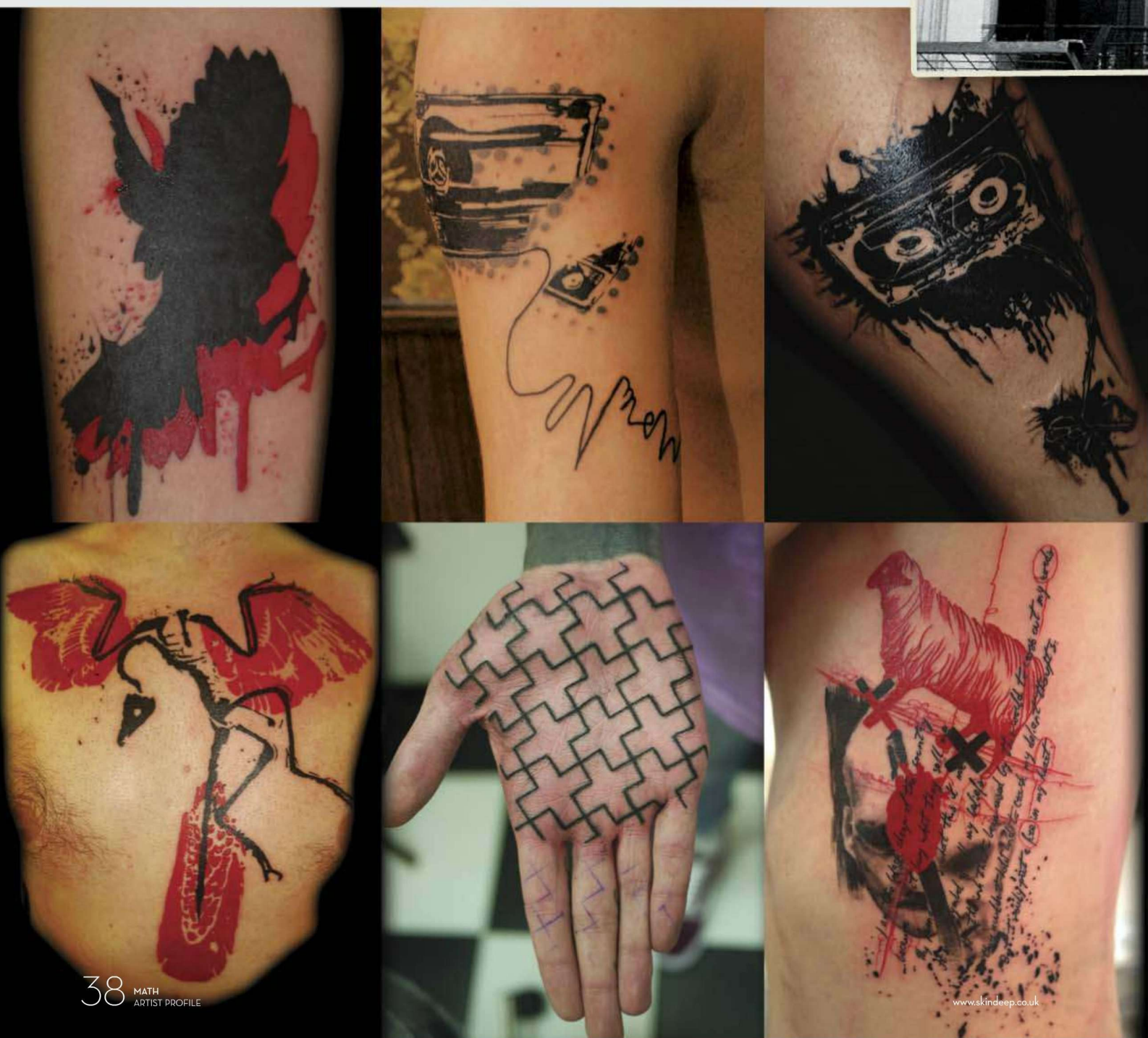
As a tattoo artist, do you think you're even halfway to being as

good as you think you might be, or do you not work like that? Are you quite happy to find yourself wherever you may be with no looking backwards or forwards?

"If you ever get to a point where you think you're the best you can be, then you need to stop altogether. You always have to look back at your work and see where you could have done better. Being open to criticism is very important, and you should be your harshest critic. Every day you have to do the best you can, but always knowing you can get better."

Do you get much time to work on your own art these days, or is it as much a case of carving out the time otherwise you'd never do anything?

IF PEOPLE COME TO ME FOR A TATTOO, THEN THEY HAVE USUALLY SEEN MY WORK, AND I AM FORTUNATE IN THAT PEOPLE TRUST MY STYLE AND JUDGEMENT TO THEY LET ME HAVE FREE REIGN





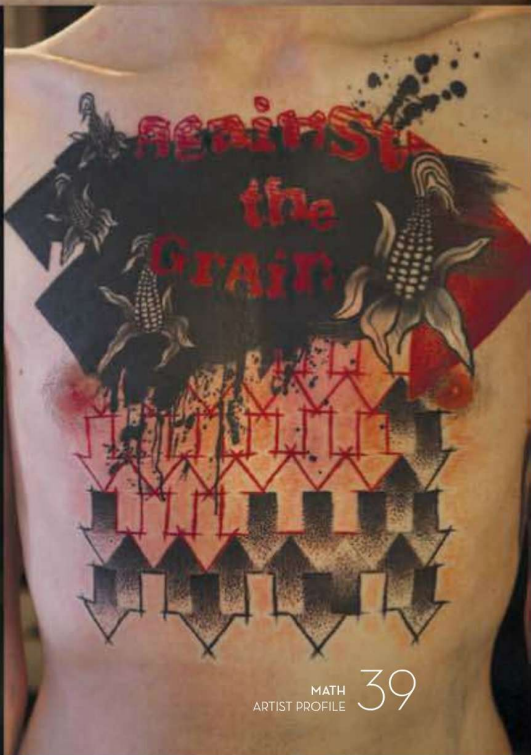
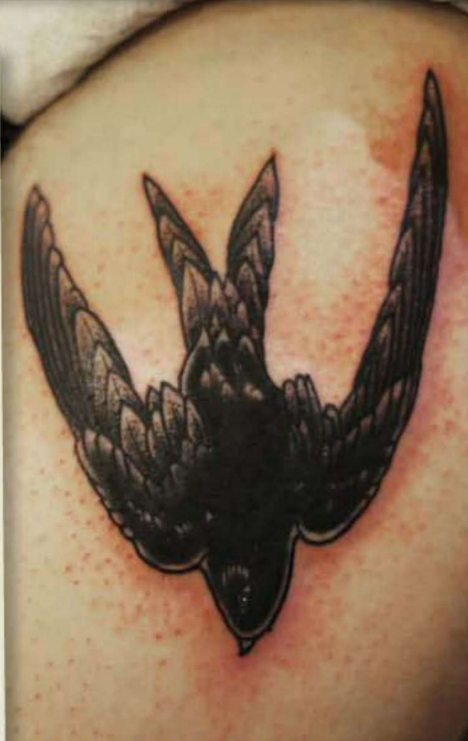


SOMETIMES I DON'T REALISE WHEN INFLUENCES OR INSPIRATION HAVE CREPT IN UNTIL I LOOK BACK AT A PIECE AND RECOGNISE AN ELEMENT IN IT

"I don't consider myself an artist. I'm a tattooist first and foremost. When I have time, I do give it a go, because it can help my work evolve, but I'm far from being able to produce works of 'art'. You have to make time to do other things, otherwise you just close yourself up to other forms of expression."

Finally, what's the deal with your clothing line? Those are some nice, subtle designs you've got going on there. Popular? The 'little detail tags' that you've added recently, really step up the perception. Nice work! Care to expand on the clothing line for us?

"My clothing line, Blackmail Clothing, is something I started with my friend, Paul Jackson (Tank.axe.love). The plan was to design clothes that we, ourselves, would want to wear, and we've tried to stick with that basic frame of mind. All the imagery is influenced by things that we grew up with."





up with, such as old metal band artwork. The Blackmail detail tag is something we've started to add to new collections, to create more of a brand and an image to go with it."

... I lied. Really finally... how are you fixed at the moment with appointments? What sort of waiting lists are we looking at, or do you tend to keep yourself free enough to work off-the-cuff as much as possible?

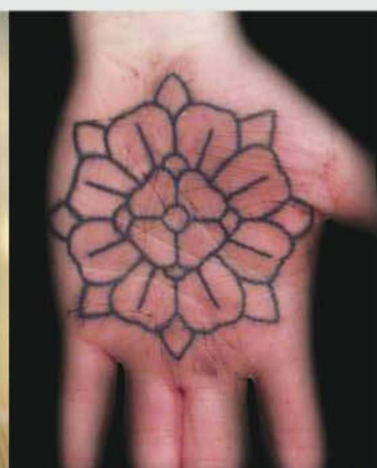
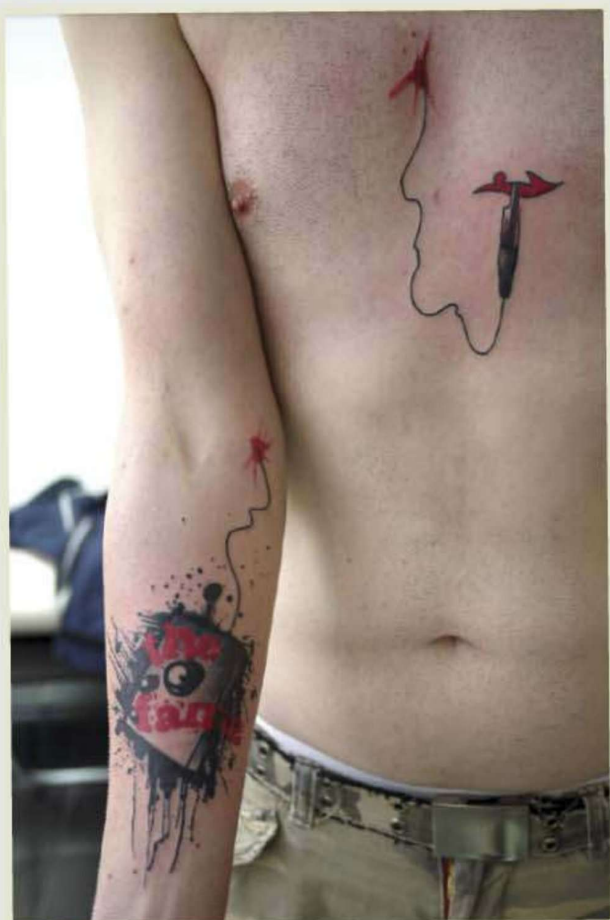
"I do have a waiting list but I try to leave space for other projects and walk-ins. However, I don't have a lot of free time at the moment because I've just opened The Circle in Soho and that's taking up the majority of my time. The main concept behind the shop was to incorporate all the creative elements, interests and influences that revolve in the industry and the lifestyle of our clients. We've got an amazing collection of artists, and together with my business partner and friend, Ashley Jagdeo, we are creating something more than just a tattoo studio. We are sourcing clothing lines and artists all the time to expand the retail aspect of the business.



"Currently we stock original art pieces, screen prints, ceramics, mens clothing and accessories. Moving forward it would be great to hold tattoo-inspired skate decks and maybe even some custom cycles! The other main part of the business is laser removal, so we have a licensed practitioner to remove tattoos or tone them down

THE MAIN CONCEPT BEHIND THE SHOP WAS TO INCORPORATE ALL THE CREATIVE ELEMENTS, INTERESTS AND INFLUENCES THAT REVOLVE IN THE INDUSTRY

for cover-ups on site full-time – something not many studios have now-a-days, even though it makes absolute sense." 🐾





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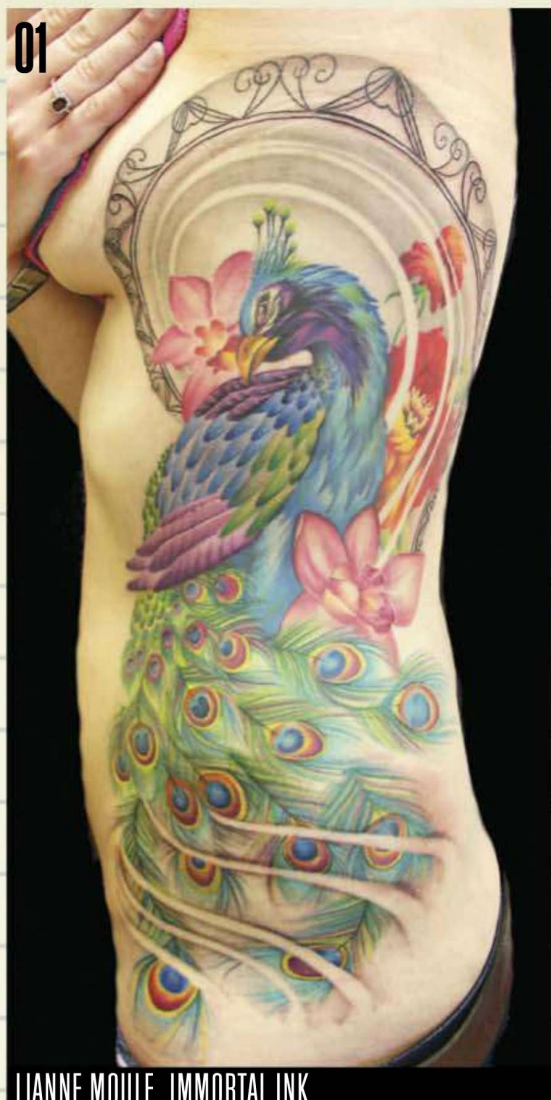


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LIANNE MOULE, IMMORTAL INK

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KERRY-ANNE, COCK A SNOOK

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JOE ELLIS, COCK A SNOOK

04



IAN MCALLISTER, RED HOT AND BLUE

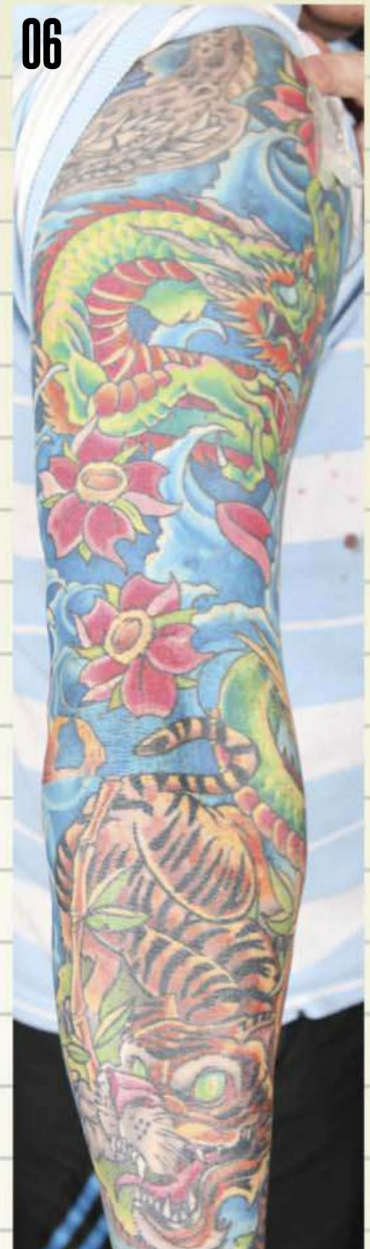


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MAT LAPPING, CREATIVE VANDALS

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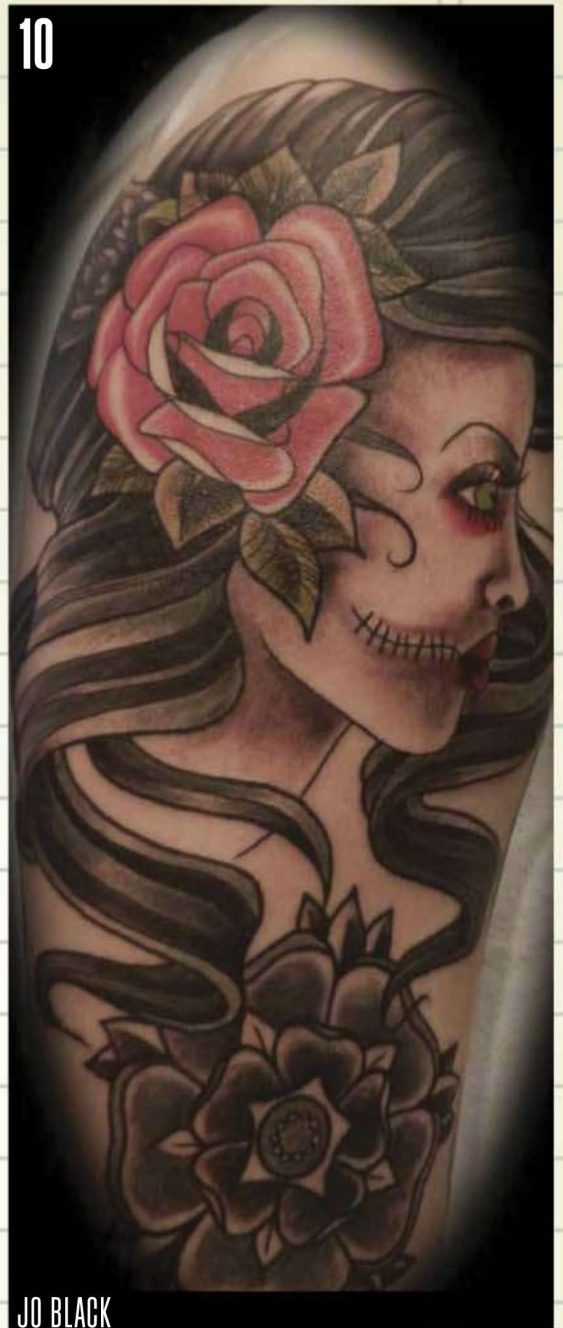


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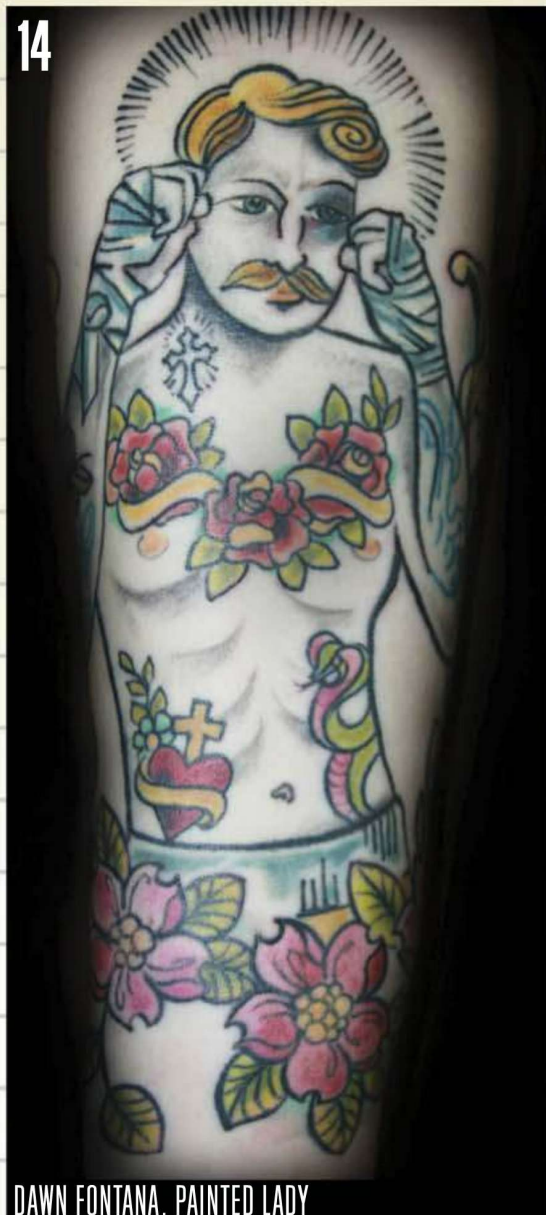


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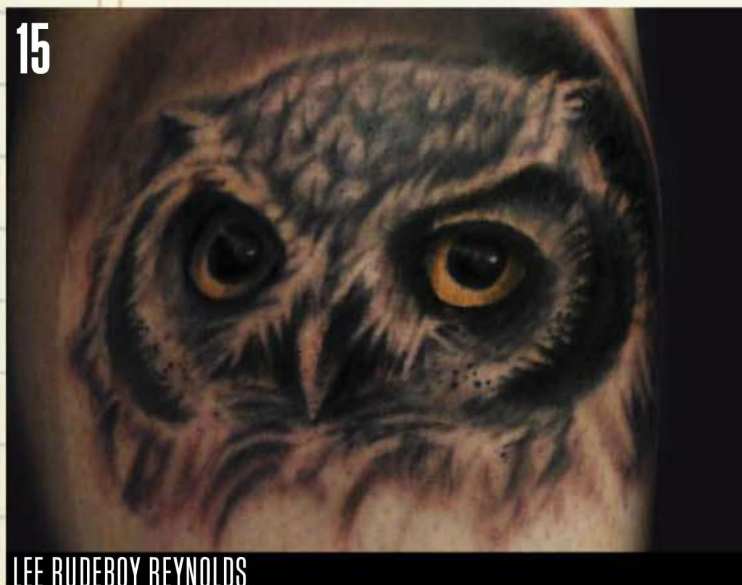
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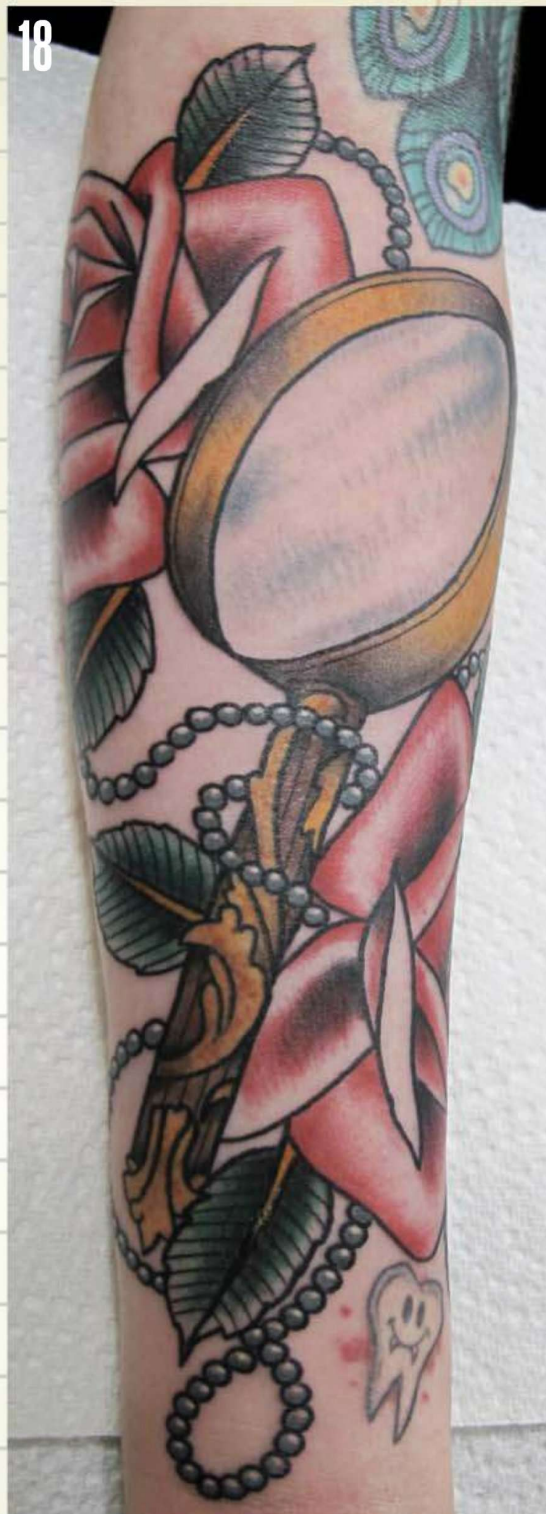


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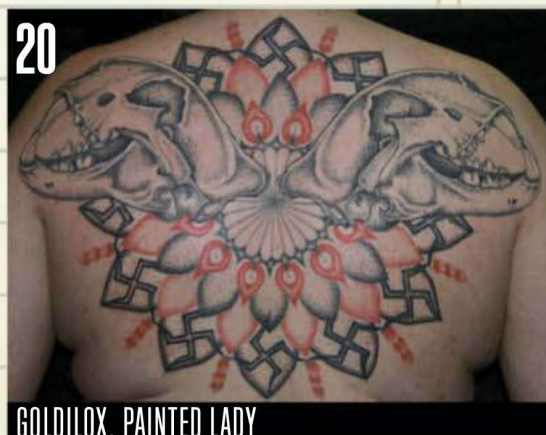
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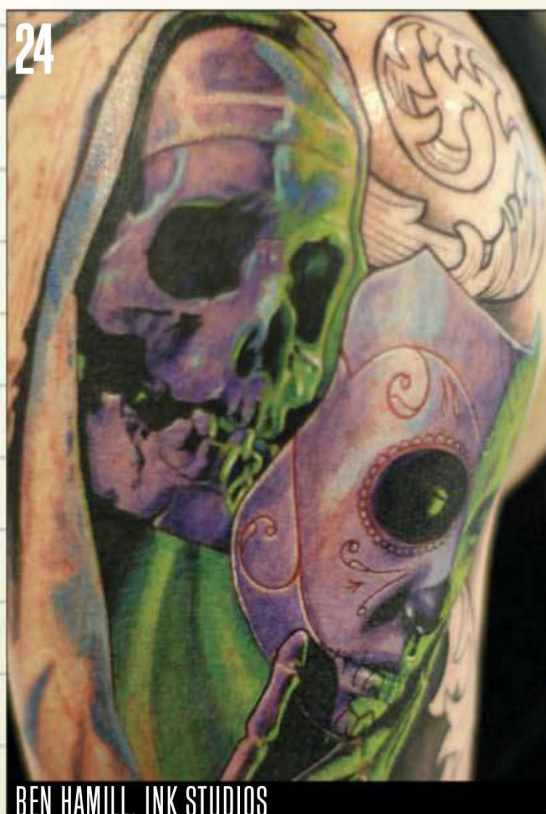
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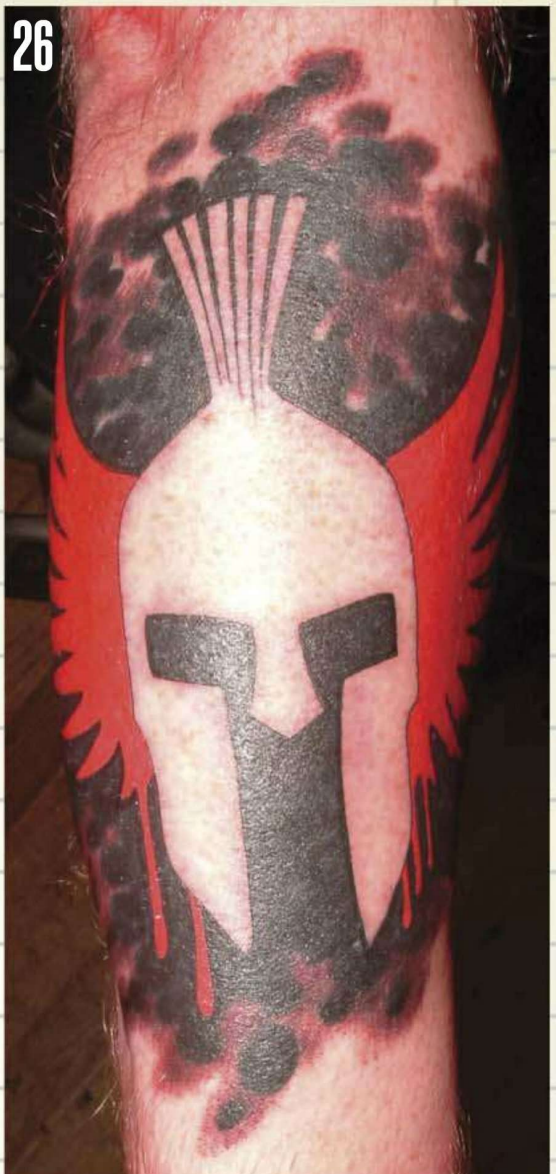


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# The girl can't help it

I've known Leah for a couple of years now and she's probably one of the most stable people I know, which is perhaps rather curious because most of the time, she gives the impression she could go off like an accident in a firework factory...



Despite what you see before your eyes here, Leah's music is beautiful in a totally different way than you would possibly think. Sultry is a good descriptor for it. It has a slow burn and while seeming to be apparently effortless, I have no doubt that one hell of a lot of work goes in to it.

The truth of the matter is, I know that a lot of work goes into it, because that's what Leah does.

So for the want of a better place to start, let's dive into the music end of the pool. It's pretty normal for musicians to be loaded to the eyeballs with ink these days – more than half of my collection is easily propelled by tattooed artists, but then, the vast majority of it is testosterone-fuelled rock. Leah isn't in that end of the pool at all, so I'm curious as to whether being tattooed affects the perceptions of her songwriting for better or worse.

"My observations have been that a lot of musicians are tattooed, probably even the majority. Mine are probably more extensive than most, but a unique image is usually an asset to a performer. I suppose the people who simply hate tattoos will find me hard to swallow as the whole package, but if they dislike my music simply because of tattoos, I'd rather they didn't bother with me at all.

"A bigger hindrance is probably that at first, my recognition came

Sion Smith As Credited



from modelling instead of singing. It might be assumed that a pretty mannequin-of-sorts surely can't be a soulful and talented musician! I hope to pleasantly surprise people. I have longed to be a singer since I was a child. The modeling was somewhat accidental.

"The only reason I haven't focused on my music as much as I want to, is the time and financial investment involved. Offers for other projects have flooded in since my Inked Magazine cover, and it consumes the free time I have outside of my day job. I believe that circulating my name and photos throughout magazines has been beneficial for the future of my music though.

"I also save the money I make from modelling, so that if a producer, label, or investor doesn't offer me an opportunity, I'll be able to afford to produce an album myself. When I put out something I intend to sell, I will settle for nothing less than the best. Recognition in magazines is my current project, not my destination. I would like nothing more than to lock myself in a studio for a month to write and record, design an album, tour with a talented band, and completely refocus."

These are strange times we live in – and nobody is exempt. All across the world, the money has run out. Whatever you want to do with your life these days, you had better not be coming to the table empty handed. To get where you're going takes a superhuman amount of effort with no stone left unturned, because you never know where your break is likely to come from. Maybe it's always been that way, but as we all sit here wired up to the nines, it's certainly more prevalent and obvious than it ever has been. That includes raising your profile wherever and whenever you can.

"Yeah, I have a column that ran for almost a year in Fast Lane Biker Magazine until I was recently in touch with Tattoo'd Lifestyle Magazine, and now, 'Leah Jung, Tattooed Jung-kie' is

featured there instead, which is a much better fit. I also write a separate column for a Norwegian Magazine, Ink Style, called 'Life of Leah'. Life of Leah, which is translated into Dutch, focuses more on my personal life and the meanings behind my tattoos, while Tattoo Jung-kie is quirky stories and advice related to tattoos. Both magazines give me full creative freedom and the feedback has been fantastic. I love writing and I have a lot of stories to tell – if I could syndicate either column, or be recognized by a magazine with greater distribution, that would be ideal!"

At which point, we stop for a moment... a pregnant pause if you will. She looks at me grinning. I look at her, thinking. File under 'pending' for the time being. Leah has been working hard for a long time now to move up her personal

ladder of achievement, we talk about her ink and I wonder of she ever gets as sick as I do of people asking the same questions over and over despite the amount of education we've all collectively thrown at the world.

"I think there is a proper time to be asked about my tattoos. When I am chatting with fans or other collectors at tattoo conventions, that is what I'm there for. I love to educate like-minded people who might otherwise be misinformed. If I get a repetitive inquiry, such as 'does it hurt?' I will try to redirect the question. 'Yes' is such an obvious answer; I'll instead mention which of my tattoos hurt the most, an answer that has changed throughout the years.

"When I get questions in emails, I often forward them a pdf of an article I've written addressing 🌸

I WOULD LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN TO LOCK MYSELF IN A STUDIO FOR A MONTH TO WRITE AND RECORD, DESIGN AN ALBUM, TOUR WITH A TALENTED BAND, AND COMPLETELY REFOCUS







■ Tina Pelech (TMD) / Makeup: Doria Tremante.



the topic – how to keep colours bright, how to get published in tattoo magazines, etc. If I am out with my friends, grocery shopping or at work, this is when I feel hassled and jaded. Most of the time, it's just someone who wants an excuse to talk to the interesting lady, and thanks, but I'm not interested."

Something that comes with the territory of being talented in no small amount is also a devilish sense of self-deprecation. There's a great quote on Leah's website from a friend which sums up... well, it



I WAS NOT POPULAR IN SCHOOL – I WAS JUST A QUIET, SCRAWNY KID IN GLASSES WHO LOVED BOOKS AND LISTENED TO ROCK AND METAL MUSIC

sums up quite a lot of things...

"Whenever I think of my friend Leah Jung, two integral and trademark expressions come to mind: "jerk-off hot" and "big fat dork".

In the most gentlemanly way possible, I decide to ignore the first part – though God knows its on the tip of my tongue – and press on with the second in the midst of both of us knowing it.

"My website bio was written by an old friend of mine from high school, and he legitimately thinks I am a dork! I was not popular in school – I was just a quiet, scrawny kid in glasses who loved books and listened to rock and metal music. I don't wear name brand clothes, I stutter when I'm nervous, I can't parallel park, and I think internet memes are hilarious.

"Back then, I was awkward, poor, and teased on a regular basis starting in the 4th grade. I took it kind of hard and became a bit of a bad kid after the age of 15 or so, drinking and sneaking out at night. But I have experienced so much, and grown up a lot since then. I feel like I can overcome anything now. I'm a pretty neat dork." 🐼





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# THE RISING SON

In a world that gets smaller with every passing hour, little things can make your day, such as this exclusive photoset and tasty personal narrative from our man in New Yawk, David Marden



One of the things I revel in when it comes to my job is the variety of people I get to meet and interact with. Some leave positive marks that make me think, and others just leave me shaking my head. This industry is full of all kinds of people so we have to take what we can and move forward. I've been blessed with not only what I've been able to photograph and interview, but also the people that have left

indelible marks on my heart, soul and mind. If it weren't for those people I'm not sure this would all be worth it. Fuck, it's not like I'm doing it for the money.

Off the top of my head there's one single person that I can think of that's impacted me to the

point of considering him more than just an industry friend, but also a close confidant. He's one of those people that not only gets your head spinning with ideas, but his artistic ability makes everyone's jaw drop. The person I'm speaking of is Horimyo 🍷

**HAVING SERVED THE TRADITIONAL TEBORI APPRENTICESHIP, HORIMYO NEVER FORGETS TO PAY HOMAGE TO THE ONES THAT CAME BEFORE HIM**



Bunshinshi, or just Horimyo.

Horimyo is one of the true Japanese tebori practitioners and he takes his craft seriously. Based out of Saitama, Japan, and learning his craft in the traditional Japanese method, Horimyo holds fast to the ancient art and ways that have made this style of tattooing not only a beautiful, but an exotic style to us [cough] uncultured westerners. Holding fast to the 'old ways', Horimyo does everything by hand, no machines are ever used, keeping the outline and color consistent in this traditional style.

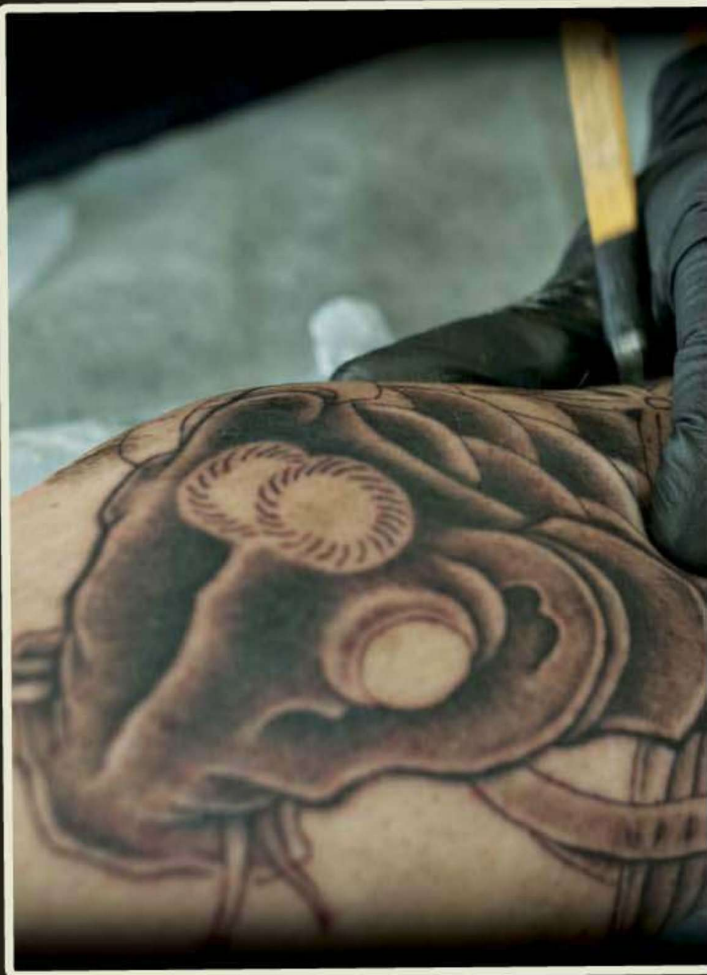
A little back story might be in order... I was getting ready to shoot the Boston Tattoo Convention, cleaning gear, checking on interviews – all that mundane drudgery we people have to deal with – when my phone rang. It was Rueben (Horikei) Kayden telling me that

I had to drop everything to come meet his mentor who was in town for the convention. At first I was thinking I'd just meet him at the BTC because I had too much to get done. But Rueben being Rueben told me to get off my ass and come over.

Yeah, it was worth dropping everything. Horimyo and I hit it off like a couple of old friends that just haven't seen each other in a few years. So OK Rueben, you were right. Bastard.

Horimyo is someone who walks that tightrope between a traditional, well regimented and formal style of tattooing, and the western-style art that we all know and see on a regular basis. Being able to meld both these mindsets into one is what makes him stand tall amongst his peers.

Having served the traditional Tebori apprenticeship, Horimyo never forgets to pay homage



HIS STYLE AND COLOUR PALETTE HAVE MADE HIM CREATE SOME OF THE MOST STUNNING TATTOOS I'VE EVER SEEN - IF TRADITIONAL JAPANESE TATTOOING IS UP YOUR STREET, THEN YOU SHOULD CHECK HORIMYO'S WORK OUT



to the ones that came before him. He's the first to say that he wouldn't be where he is if it weren't for his master and his masters' master. Always having his feet well planted in traditional Japanese tattooing and a passion for all things western have made this man not only a credit to the ones that came before him, but an honour to the ones that call him friend. So here we are, four years into our friendship and my respect for Horimyo continues to grow.

The last time Horimyo was in the States, he was here in the Boston area doing some tattoo work; he asked me to come over to hang out while he tattooed and maybe shoot a few pictures for him. Anyone that knows me knows that it's never just a 'couple pictures'. That afternoon 🍷









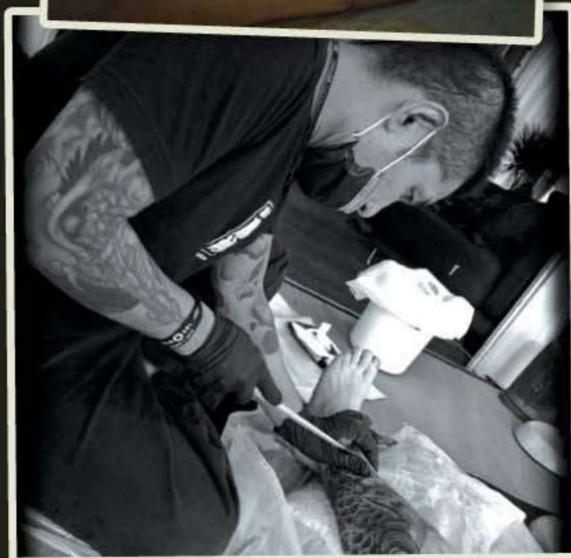
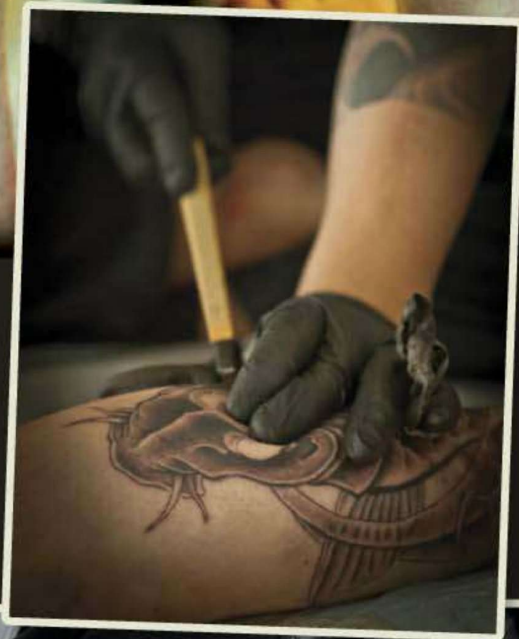
I wound up fully documenting this amazing Koi he was doing on this guy's leg. Not only was I able to get up close and personal with the photography, it was also a great time to get caught up with an old friend who I normally only get to communicate with via email or skype.

Working not only tattoo conventions throughout the world, Horimyo travels a lot lecturing and educating people on tebori and Japanese art, mythology and styles. Even if he wasn't a friend, he'd still be someone I'd have to check out. His style and color palette have made him create some of the most stunning tattoos I've ever seen (and that's a lot). I honestly have to say if traditional Japanese tattooing is up your street, then you should check Horimyo's work out. He travels extensively

through the European tattoo scene and comes to the States at least once a year or when time permits – and as you will understand, his time is at a premium and in high demand.

Horimyo will be traveling in Europe and the US throughout July, August and September, so keep an eye out for him at the international shows or doing a guest spot somewhere near you. Even if you aren't getting any work from him, you should check his portfolio out or even just go make him feel welcome in a foreign land.

Horimyo's work and tour schedule can be seen on his website: [www.horimyo.com](http://www.horimyo.com) – it's well worth spending a little time checking his work out, not only for seeing what he's all about, but also to soak up some fantastic imagery of traditional hand-poked tebori work. 🐡





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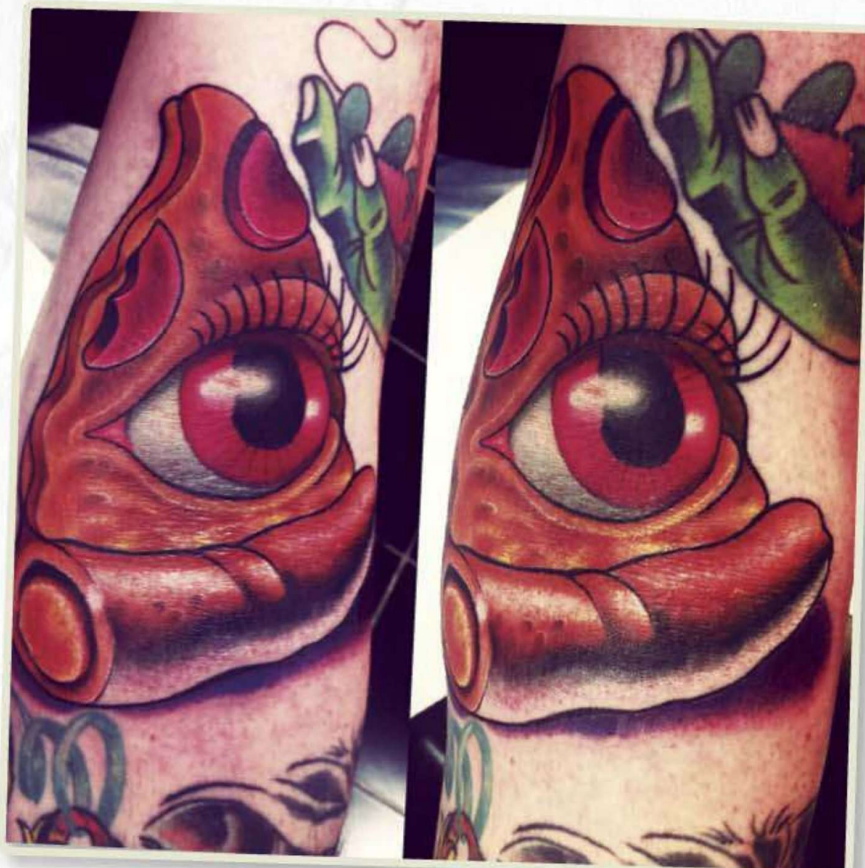
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For a small(-ish) city, York has at least seven studios within arrow-range of the city walls. The latest number to join the ranks – Joe 'JJ' Jackson's Awake Arise – is a little different though. It's well out of the centre for one, and for another, you'd glance at it without realising it's a studio; maybe an indie record store, perhaps? It's a loud name with a low profile, and that's how JJ likes it.

"It took me weeks to grit my teeth and get the tattoo sign put up," he says, explaining why he chose this location instead of a more central spot. "I didn't want it to be one of those price checking places, where people come in and ask 'how much will you do this for, because this other place will do it for this much?'; I never wanted that." JJ's philosophy is that walk-in trade can become distracting and might lead artists

Russ Thorne  JJ







to follow the money rather than their art. "I think you do get greedy when loads of people are coming in. I just want to do artwork that I think will look good on people."

#### **ANCIENT HISTORY**

Awake Arise is definitely no flash-bashing conveyor belt. Light and airy, the indie record store vibe continues when you walk into what feels like the middle of a White Stripes showhome – a white/ black/ red colour scheme, oversized frames on grainy prints, splendidly kooky comic book paraphernalia, and enough lollies to see anyone through an entire backpiece.

It's a relaxed, upmarket place, and if the décor is accidental ("I've always liked black and red as a colour scheme, I don't know why"), the atmosphere isn't. "I wanted it to be an open plan studio because I like that feel, all those old school studios have that feel and that's really cool." A partition shields the chairs from prying eyes on the street, but otherwise it's a roomy set-up without the spooky

I FELT I WANTED TO GO FURTHER THAN JUST MAKING MONEY AND TATTOOING SMALL TRINKET TATTOOS ON PEOPLE THAT THEY'D COME BACK AND GET COVERED UP A WEEK LATER

claustrophobia that can go hand-in-hand with being invited to step into the boxy tattooing space of some shops. And the sofa is comfy, too.

So how did we get here? JJ picked up a tattoo machine seven years ago and was initially self-taught, but his progress was erratic and also interrupted by more formal education. "I went to Northumbria University – I got good art grades at school and I wasn't sure that tattooing was really for me," he explains, "so I thought, 'why not go?'"

One degree later, and with a little help from Newcastle's legendarily cosy music circuit, he found himself a studio chair. He'd done a little tattooing during his studies and also got to know Kerry-Anne, now heading up Tyneside stalwart, Cock-a-Snook – "we're into the same music and art, and we'd see each other at punk shows" – who set him up at





her former shop. "I worked there for two years getting my basics right, going back and starting again pretty much," he recalls of the busy street shop that turned over a lot of small walk-in pieces.

His art progressed and ultimately led him to a spot at John Anderton's Nemesis studio after a chat with the artist at a convention. Three days into working there he got a call from his mum telling him a shop was up for rent in York – his home city. "I said I couldn't do it, I'd just started with John!"

His mentor saw things differently, though. "John was great. He said 'I'd rather you pursue what you actually want to do rather than sit here living in regret.'" And the rest, as they say...

#### GOING PRO

The studio is very much the product of JJ pursuing what he wanted to do, which seems to be a running theme of his career so far. "When I was in the [Tyneside] studio, I was still very self-taught – the art I was aiming for wasn't



I'VE GOT A MEMORY LIKE A SPONGE FOR ART. I'LL FORGET TO PUT THE WASHING ON BUT I'LL REMEMBER TINY ELEMENTS FROM COMPUTER GAMES

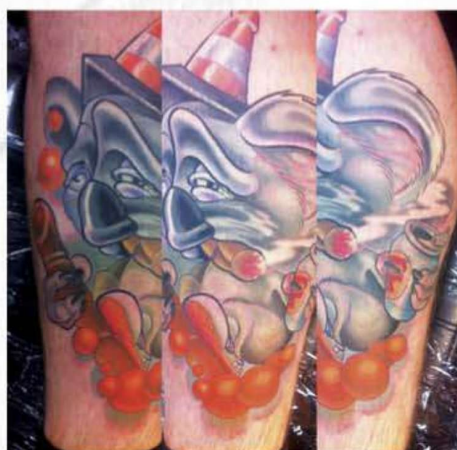


the same as the art of some of the other guys there," he recalls. "I felt I wanted to go further than just making money and tattooing small trinket tattoos on people that they'd come back and get covered up a week later."

Instead, tattooing was an extension of everything he'd been working on at art college and university; another medium to play with and develop. "I was into ideas and learning concepts. I wanted to get better at my art and make a style for myself, a visual tag that people would recognise as mine."

"I think college helped my tattooing. There was lots of experimenting and creating stuff that pleased you. I specialised in typography and did a lot of letterpress stuff, which basically no one does now."

Letterpress – the original form of printing, involving pressing inked







WITHOUT GOING ALL MIAMI INK I ALSO LIKE TATTOOING PEOPLE AND HEARING THEIR IDEAS AND DIFFERENT STORIES – IT'S GOOD TO WORK WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF TATTOOING TO GET NEW RESULTS

metal or wooden blocks into paper – is surely not a million miles away from the philosophy of tattooing I suggest. It's a very physical kind of art, involving impact on the canvas, whether that's paper or skin. JJ agrees that it's all about making an impression, in every sense. "We had a section in typography where you had to create a letter form that said something without actually saying it, and with tattooing you need to make that kind of impression too; you don't have to understand it, you just need to look at it and appreciate what it is. And if more people start thinking like that, then more tattoos can be art for art's sake."

#### WORKS IN PROGRESS

We're sat in the reception area of the studio (complete with a row of Skin Deep issues, which he assures, isn't for sucking up purposes), presided over by right-hand-man, Jack, who handles all appointments and keeps the studio in order. He serves a further function, though – reminding the boss where his art began, and how

it has developed.

"A lot of my early stuff is on Jack," says JJ as Jack looks on cheerily. "When I see early bits I did on him I cringe, but I know now that I can sort it out to a decent level; but it's easier tattooing a friend than anyone else. If I'd started in a studio, I doubt I'd still be tattooing now!"

The wealth of information available on the internet now is a blessing and a curse, he suggests, thinking about his early days. It's good for learning about health and safety when tattooing, but can give people false confidence. "I'd hate to promote tattooing at home, but with so much information out there, it must be hard for people not to think 'oh, I can do this'. But the main issue is that you've got to be artistically capable; if you can't do it on paper, you can't do it on skin. You need to start with the art before you even start tattooing."

So does it help or hinder his confidence to have a walking portfolio of his tattooing career sat at the front desk? Both laugh. "The newer more accomplished pieces are further towards the extremities



and more visible," says JJ. "The old stuff wasn't put in that well, so it's easy to cover up! You're getting ripped today, aren't you?" he shoots at Jack. "I am, I am," comes the philosophical reply.

#### AWAKING THE ART

At present JJ is the main artist in residence at Awake Arise (with occasional realism and horror duties performed by Gareth 'Big G' Unwin when he's not at Talisman Tattoo – another York newbie); what kind of work can people expect? 🍷

#### WAKING UP

Three steps to getting your tattoo from Awake Arise:

- 1. Get in touch.** "The best thing is to come down for a consultation although most of the time we can sort stuff over the internet," says JJ. "Jack's great for that." ("Wool!" says Jack.)
- 2. Talk it over.** "The majority of people call or email. I won't turn something down if I don't like it although I might suggest different things."
- 3. Decide on an idea.** "People give me ideas and I suggest stuff. It's rare I get people who are definite with what they want but if they like my style as well as old school, I'll do a more traditional style rather than big fat outlines. I do get a lot of that because traditional is popular at the moment!"



"I'm heavily influenced by American new school. Originally it was all dice, flaming 8-balls and graffiti-ish New York stuff," he says, "but now I look at a lot of Crayola's work and try and grab pieces from other places too. I'm doing lots of animals doing stupid stuff, but I've also been doing a bit of organic, biomech stuff. It's a graphic, bold, colourful style."

That would certainly suit the bold graphical décor of the studio, but colour can mean many things according to JJ. "I think when people say they want colourful pieces, they actually mean a nice contrast between the colours. You look at Tanane Whitfield's work and he actually uses a lot of muted earth tones, but it looks immensely colourful because of the way he's used them."

You won't get chased out for requesting black and grey, of course, but whatever you're after don't always expect to see colour references, as JJ doesn't use them. "I do a prelim sketch, single line with a few accents, then colour



while I'm doing it. I think you get a better feel for the colour that way, I treat it like an oil painting and go with it." Isn't that a bit hair raising? "It sounds bad, but if it works, it works, and if not, you can adjust it. But touch wood it's working well so far!" You only need to look at the pics to agree with that one.

I THINK COLLEGE HELPED MY TATTOOING - THERE WAS LOTS OF EXPERIMENTING AND CREATING STUFF THAT PLEASED YOU. I SPECIALISED IN TYPOGRAPHY AND DID A LOT OF LETTERPRESS STUFF, WHICH BASICALLY NO ONE DOES NOW



#### TOP OF THE HILL

Looking around the studio, it seems that everything is working well so far, not just the tattooing. Tattooing friends is certainly a bonus, says JJ, and there are perks to all clients. "I do like my space, but without going all *Miami Ink* I also like tattooing people and hearing their ideas and different stories. And it's good to work with different people with different concepts of tattooing to get new results."

Even the homework's good, he adds. "When I'm painting outside of work I know I'm still helping my job. Maybe that's kind of sad, but it's good to know my art is progressing. I've got a memory like a sponge for art, I'll forget to put the washing on but I'll remember tiny elements from computer games or whatever. I do a lot of drawing without reference."

All in all, this is one York invader who's here to stay. "It's a great job to have, I have very little stress. You can't complain coming in at 11 in the morning, tattooing for the day and going home to draw! It's a blessing." 🐾

#### THAT FIRST TATTOO

"The first ever piece I did was on myself, and to be honest, looking at it now it's not actually that bad; it's a dagger I took out of a magazine. My first tattoo on a person... I went to a fashion show and one of my friends came up and said 'I hear you've got a tattoo machine, do you want to tattoo me?'"

"So we went and did this tattoo of two symmetrical armbands and I put on the stencil with greaseproof paper and a biro or something stupid like that. On the third wipe, the stencil came off completely so I got a big black marker and just drew around his arm; and the worst part was he was allergic to something in the cling film that we wrapped it in, so he had a bad reaction to that. But I've seen it recently and it's fine. It's not the best tattoo but it's not the worst... "Actually, it probably is the worst!"





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# The bank job

We may have reached a logical conclusion with the cast of *NY INK*, but there's still plenty left to talk about. This issue, Jessica Gahring picks up the gauntlet

The first thing Jessica notices when we begin our conversation over Skype is the art that I have hanging on the wall behind me. Unsurprisingly, art is her primary passion, and working as a tattoo artist she makes it her duty to be at the tattoo shop first thing in the morning, ready to take early customers. Fortunately for her, she also has the flexibility to take time out to spend with her daughter. At the end of *NY Ink* season two, Jessica received a call from her friend Lydia who works as a tattoo artist in Lake George, New York, offering her a job in the tattoo shop she works in. Jessica worked with Lydia briefly a few years back, but the need for health insurance called her back to 'normal employment' (banking), but she always knew she'd return to tattooing. Currently, Jessica works in a studio closer to her home and is planning to open her own tattoo studio in the near future.

"It was different than most studios at Wooster Street Social Club, it felt more like a tourist spot. There was a much larger global presence, and more customers that were simply there because it was the tattoo shop that had been featured on *NY Ink*." Jessica was quick to dispel a lot of the opinions people had drawn about her based on what they'd seen on TV. "A lot of people felt I'd just come straight from banking and had just randomly decided to tattoo. It wasn't like that though. The show was edited in a certain way that made it appear that I didn't have a background in tattooing, but to



I'D LIKE TO HAVE ANOTHER BABY TOO AT SOME POINT, SO I WON'T GET MY STOMACH TATTOOED. I STILL HAVE A LOT OF SPACE

be honest, I started appearing in tattoo magazines back in 2007. I used to work with Chip Beam – a great tattoo artist and friend of mine – in Vestal, New York. When I was working at university I'd go to his studio, set him up and break him down. And from him I learnt the fundamental health and safety aspect which I still hold today. I

was really drawn to Chip's black and grey style too. We used to go to a lot of conventions together where I was able to watch first-hand the likes of Guy Aitchison and Mike DeVries. I remember being blown away by the size of Mike's colour ink palette!"

Jessica has an eight-year-old daughter, Jordyn, who she



supported with the steady paycheck and health insurance afforded from working in banking, but she always wanted to pursue a career in tattoo. Production knew all this about her and she feels they purposefully introduced difficulties to her path to see just how badly she wanted it, or at the very least, to cause drama in the process. "That's my speculation of the situation anyway. I believe certain things were overlooked about my tattooing past or blatantly left out, but I don't blame the show for that. It's not like it's this big secret thing, it's all on my facebook fan page. The information is all there, it was never some kind of conspiracy. I didn't just pick up a

BECAUSE OF MY DAUGHTER, I COULDN'T JUST PICK UP AND MOVE. I CONTACTED A FRIEND WHO LIVED IN NEW YORK AND HE AND HIS GIRLFRIEND LET ME STAY WITH THEM FROM MONDAY TO FRIDAY

machine and go at it; I've worked to get where I am today. I was literally in shops for years before I even had the guts to pick up a tattoo machine! Maybe I didn't pay my dues in one studio over a three-year period, but I've worked in a few studios and I still very much respect each and everyone I've worked with, and they feel the same about me. I've learned from many different people and styles, and I'm still very much learning."

For the people that knew Jessica in her teenage years, they would know tattooing was something she always wanted to do. Just before the show started, she had an email from a woman she'd gone to undergraduate school with. "She was in New York City and told me that Ami James was opening a tattoo studio in SoHo and was looking for managers, artists, apprentices, the whole nine." Jessica's friend told her that she couldn't think of a better opportunity for her, and Jessica agreed. "I went home that day,

typed up my resume, got my portfolio together, and sent it in. I told them I wasn't tattooing at the time, but would be happy with taking a management role in the shop just to get my foot in the door. Two hours later I received a phone call and was invited for an interview. We did a casting video, and between TLC and Ami they decided to take me on."

I was keen to understand why Jessica had chosen banking as an intermittent career choice.

First it was higher education administration, then tattooing, then banking, then tattooing. "Regarding my brief stint in banking, I wanted to learn about business banking and its financials. I know that eventually I'm going to open my own studio; that has always been in the back of my mind. I went into banking because I had a plan. It was about working through each part of the plan, and banking was part of that, the first stage. Now I'm tattooing and the idea of starting up my own business isn't too far away now. I probably could do it now, but you don't want to rush these things. Also, there are many artists in my area that I love and respect, and I wouldn't want to set up shop in their backyard, so to speak."

In terms of her actual tattooing style, Jessica still feels there are certain kinds of tattooing she isn't so confident with. "If I don't have the confidence to do a certain tattoo, I let my customer know where they can go to get it done. There's this great guy who called me asking if I could do a memorial portrait of his mother. I was flattered, but I was honest with him and explained it wasn't something at this point I felt I could give justice to. I said that perhaps in the future he could give me a call, but he was very keen to get tattooed by me. He asked if we could just do something traditional instead, and that's what we did. He's coming back again soon to see me – he hadn't been tattooed since 1986! This gentleman has become one of many regular clients of mine,







and I attribute this to my sincere honesty with my own abilities."

Jessica grew up in a very conservative family, so tattooing was always considered something of a taboo. "Your body was a temple, that sort of thing." But a lot of things about the church bothered Jessica when she was growing up. She wasn't allowed to wear trousers on a Sunday; she had to wear a dress instead. But Jessica always felt that if the Lord was such a respectful person, then why would he care what one was wearing, and even further, why would he care if one had tattoos. Even as a child, Jessica was drawn to art. Her father was a painter and she remembers being amazed at how he'd put someone's face on the paper so accurately with either pencil or pain. There were many things that didn't make sense to her about the Church's opinion of things, and it was those things that Jessica found herself particularly drawn to. "I thought it was amazing that you could create art on the skin."

By the time she was in university Jessica had a lot of friends who were heavily tattooed and/or pierced; she wanted to be surrounded by people like that. "So it wasn't entirely a shock to my family when I started getting tattooed." Later in her career, while working in higher education, a caricature artist asked her, 'If you

could have any job in the world, what would it be?' She responded by saying, 'a tattoo artist!' so he drew her as a tattoo artist, and she still has the picture to this day. "It was when my hair was naturally blonde and before I was getting heavily tattooed. You'd never look at me and think I was going to be this person that went on to work in tattooing and body modification."

For Jessica, working in higher education and dealing with bureaucracy begun to have a stifling effect on her. "I'm a passion chaser, I like being happy. At the

IF I DON'T HAVE THE CONFIDENCE TO DO A CERTAIN TATTOO, I LET MY CUSTOMER KNOW WHERE THEY CAN GO TO GET IT DONE

end of the day I would rather tattoo than deal with that side of things. I don't have my neck, chest, or my hands tattooed though, so when I was in banking I was able to get away with being heavily tattooed." Jessica's philosophy is that she can walk in both realms of society, and that is very important to her. "I think that when you understand the stereotypes, and those lines, 🌻





people will open themselves up more to you, simply because you're respecting both sides of it. We're trying to change the perspective of tattooing. Unfortunately those stereotypes still exist amongst conservative minds, but because of the way I approach it, it's going to open a lot more eyes."

Looking at Jessica's role in *NY Ink*, I wanted to find out what her favourite style of tattooing was,

as that was something which never got entirely uncovered on the show. "I would say my favourite style is black and grey photorealism – I love doing that smooth shading. It takes a lot of patience. Usually I don't have much of an attention span, but for whatever reason, I've found that I do when I'm tattooing. But I want to be versatile, to be able to do everything. I'm comfortable with

saying if it's not my speciality then I can send you to somebody whose speciality it is. I think because of my pin-up style I'm attracting a lot of people who are particularly into that traditional style of tattooing, so I'm actually tattooing more of that than I thought I would be, but I'm really enjoying it. I'll probably take on a little of that traditional style, but it's definitely that black and grey that I really love, and infusing it with maybe a little bit of colour."

Black and grey tattoos are a style that was featured heavily on *NY Ink*, particularly the work of Tim Hendricks and Tommy Montoya. "I didn't know of Tommy prior to the show, but I knew of Tim. My heart beat so fast before I met him. I felt so unbelievably blessed to be working with him because

I WOULD SAY MY FAVOURITE STYLE IS BLACK AND GREY PHOTOREALISM – I LOVE DOING THAT SMOOTH SHADING. IT TAKES A LOT OF PATIENCE



he's such a phenomenal and talented person who is also very humble. Tommy is the same way. He was my number one supporter and I think that the show finally showed that in the end. They didn't show how awesome he was to me all the time, but he was really my buddy; we'd do push-ups at the shop every day and he'd make me laugh more than anyone else there. I respect the two of them so much because black and grey is one of the hardest things to do; to get a very smooth transition between your



shadows and your highlights. When you're working with something as delicate as a portrait, you have to be on it. You have to have an attention to detail that is astute; it has to be strong. Megan is a phenomenal colour artist; she has a style that is very whimsical. So I watched her a lot because it wasn't naturally how I would work. I also have never really been drawn to the Japanese style, but it was great to be exposed to that too through Ami and Billy. There wasn't a style not on display at Wooster, because there were also a lot of people behind the scenes too; it's a huge shop, and if you haven't scoped it out then you definitely should."

Jessica's pin-up style goes a lot further than just the look. "It goes back to my idea of childhood and family. My parents got divorced when I was in high school, and even though I went through a period where I was like 'screw family' and 'screw marriage', I've developed a strong bond with the idea of it. Marriage to me was something that really interested me when I was in undergraduate school studying sociology. I remember being drawn to the era of the '50s. Even if it appeared to be somewhat fake or staged, there was this idea that you stand by your family no matter what. So even though I hated that because I didn't have it, I felt there was something beautiful in the idea of it. Okay, so the woman stays at home, and god, I could never stay at home! But I think it would be great if I could. You don't bail on each other either; you don't cancel or give up unless the situation is clearly unhealthy for the children and one's

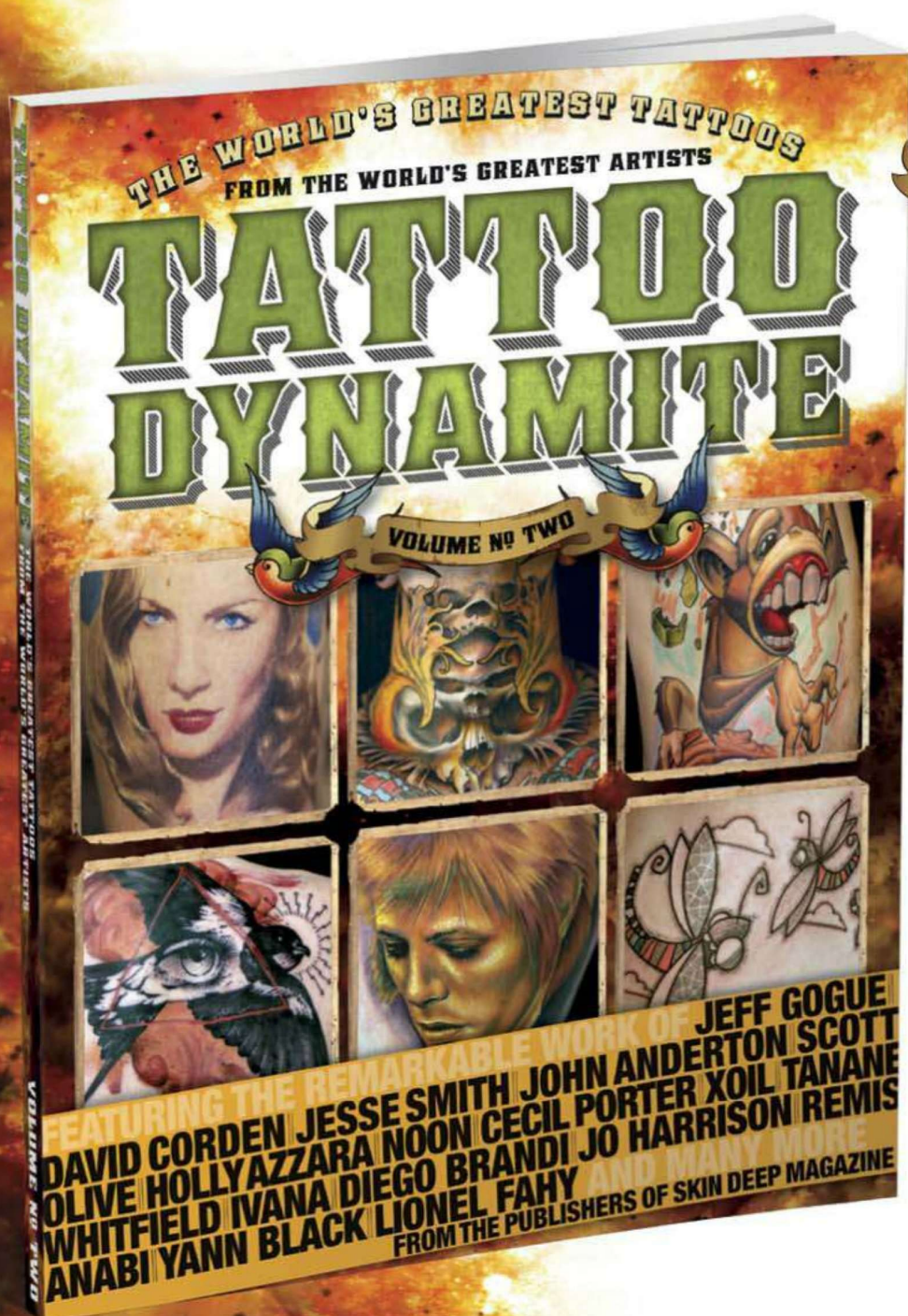
mental health. And the music of that era just has so much passion. Nothing sounds like it did then, and nothing is made the same way it was then either. I have products from the '50s that still work and run perfectly, but everything now comes apart almost immediately. The clothes were sexy then and their lines were cut perfectly. You didn't feel you had to starve yourself to get on a runway. You could be curvy and you could be a woman, and my mum had always said women were supposed to be curvy. You're supposed to shake when you walk. You take all of those things and you put them altogether, and it's just natural that I'd be crazily in love with the pin-up image. I really want to do my own line of pin-up professional clothing. The more and more I became involved in tattooing, the more I started embracing the things that I love, and started dressing that way."

Jessica's early upbringing might also have something to do with her deep fascination with family and tradition, and we closed our conversation with Jessica exploring her childhood. "I lived out in the country. I could ride dirt bikes on a daily basis. My dad would walk out of the front door and go hunting. Mum still lives in the same house I grew up in, and I love that feeling when I go home because it feels like I'm really going home, y'know? I can fish and fillet a fish like nobody's business – give me a blade and a fish and I'll work magic! I can skin a deer and field dress a deer. I love that, I love that I grew up like that. I love camping; I grew up doing that kind of thing all the time. And I was always very close to my mother, and still am. She's a phenomenal woman that puts everything into her family, which is a great example to set. I credit my mother for the strong woman that I am today and for my inability to give up. Cheers to my mum!" 🍷

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# FEDERAL LAW

I believe there are two things that define us in life – the events that happen to us and how we react to those events. We can either use these events to learn and ultimately shape us for the better, or we can let them consume and destroy us. Jeremiah Beshears is one of those people who took his crazy childhood and used it to shape the man he has become today... or rather the amazing tattoo artist he is today



**Jeremiah Beshears**  
Federal Tattoo  
299 E. Washington  
Avenue  
Sunnyvale

408-462-9275  
inablink@msn.com  
jeremiah.beshears.com

Trent Aiken-Smith Jeremiah

Born in San Jose, California in 1976, Jeremiah's childhood didn't run as smoothly as most. From what he remembers of those early days, his father was part of a notorious motorcycle club and his mother was just home a lot. His father would take him fishing every once in a while, or sometimes, to his buddy's motorcycle shop... other than that he was rarely home.

But then something happened that is hard for any kid to take, but credit to Jeremiah, he turned it around and began what would become a lifelong love of all things art.

"Things didn't go as planned for a normal family, and soon Mom and Dad split. From there we moved in with my Grandma and Grandpa Garcia; my

Mother's parents. They lived on an old road, in an old house, on an acre lot. I constantly found myself drawing and creating things to pass the time at my Grandparent's house. I'd rummage through their storage area finding anything I could use for my creations; from trinkets to old machinery, pieces of wood. Anything I could use to make my own spaceships, forts, play weapons, etc. Gluing them together and painting them up with old materials I would find lying around the lot. Boy, now that I'm writing this and reading it, I think I may have been a strange child!

I PICKED UP A FEW BAD HABITS. LIKE I SAID THERE WAS NOTHING TO DO IN TURLOCK AND I DIDN'T WANT TO STARE AT COWS ALL DAY!

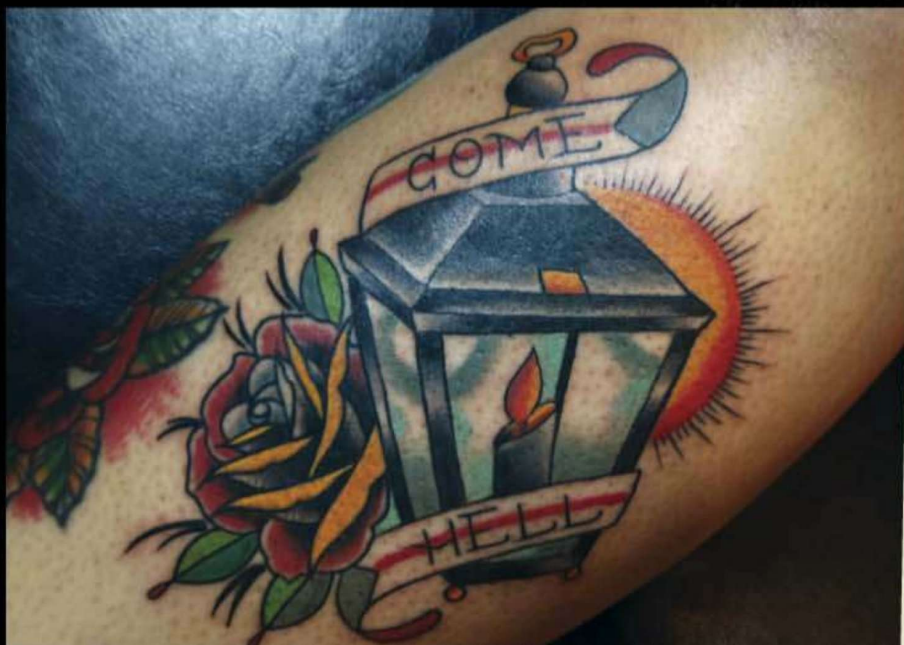


"I would spend a lot of time with my cousins who also lived in the city. Most of them were older than me and would take me under their wing whenever I would get the chance to hang with them. Usually it would be overnight or for the weekend... which seemed like a lot of time. Mom always had college classes or dates, so I'd get dropped."

Thankfully for Jeremiah, he had an extended family that picked up where his Mom and Dad left off, and from within this family, his first introduction to art came about.

"One of my biggest influences while growing up was the movies and comics that I would continually watch and read. Even to this very day! Most of them 🍌"





were introduced to me by my good cousin, Joe Castro. He was a collector of movie memorabilia, comics, and toys. In fact he had his room and the spare room in his parent's house dedicated to housing his collectables.

"It was definitely a wonderland of sorts for me. Although the toys in the boxes were off limits, he usually had the same exact ones out of boxes that he would let me play with. He would also let me watch his collection of movies and listen to his punk rock music – Black Flag, The Dead Kennedys. Man I felt so cool!"

"My eyes were filled with images of *Mad Max*, *Alien*, *Conan*, heavy metal and Iron Maiden. I know for a fact this is what began to trickle into my already artistic abilities. I would sit in front of the TV or a comic and try to render the best I could what I was seeing on paper. Or just create my own characters – monsters, aliens, robots and buffed superheroes were what I knew!"

"In my mind, this is what my life consisted of at the time. I pretty much owe it to my cousins, especially Joe who now owns Time Tunnel Toys, in San Jose. They gave me the inspiration that

I would refuse to skip, science and art. I liked those classes so I figured I would wait till after third period to cut and run the streets. Drawing and sketching were always a constant in my youth. Whether I was up or down, it was always there connecting me to the outside world.

"In those high school years, I picked up a few bad habits. Like I said there was nothing to do in Turlock and I didn't want to stare at cows all day! This is when things started twisting and turning as they do with youths who experiment with



I WAS STATIONED IN NEW MEXICO FOR SIX YEARS. IT WAS HERE WHERE A FEW MORE EXCITING THINGS HAPPENED IN MY LIFE; NAMELY OIL PAINTS, CHARCOAL AND MY NEW BABY DAUGHTER, EDEN

I would use later in my career. Joe would look at my art, praise it and tell me how good it was. For a young guy, it feels good to do something that someone else enjoys. I'm sure he still has some of those drawings still."

A few years went by and Jeremiah's mother moved them out of the Bay Area and into the Valley, to the small city of Turlock. A place Jeremiah describes as, "filled with cows and drugs".

"I went to high school in Turlock, where I had two classes

things they shouldn't, and it definitely portrayed itself in my art! Doomsday scenes, demons, dark, twisted images ran through my work. I still like to tattoo these kinds of images, but in no way am I in that frame of mind. Darker twisted stuff just seems to me like it has more emotion and mystery involved in it."

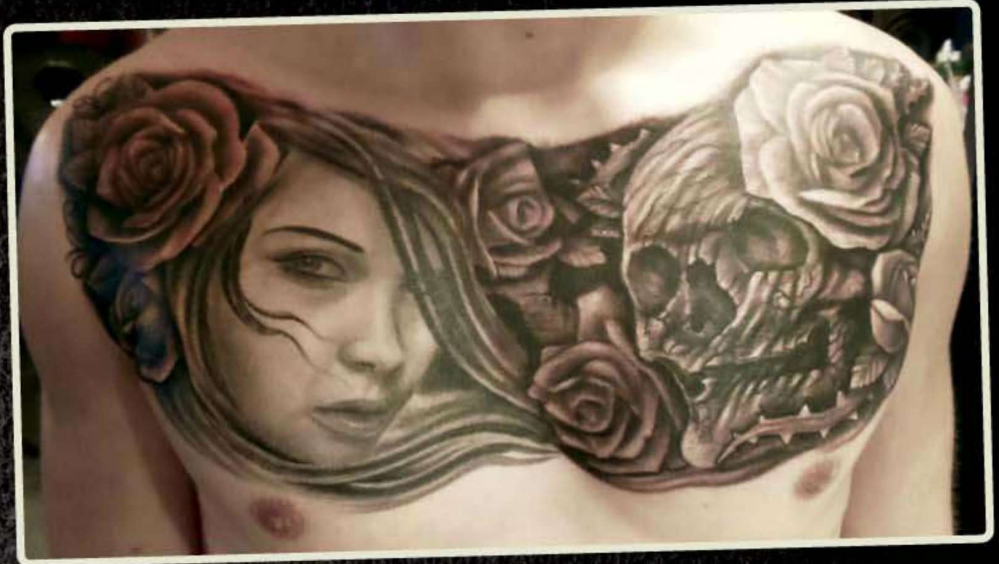
At 14 years old, Jeremiah found himself hanging with an older, not-so-law-abiding crowd. He got himself caught up in that stage of life when we think we are



immortal and anything goes. "I was smoking stuff and drinking stuff and just doing bad stuff. That's when I got my first tattoo... in my buddy's kitchen. That shit hurt like a hot iron being dragged across my chest. So brutal and crudely done, I felt like a badass! Or so I thought..."

"From that point on I had the passion and desire to get tattooed and eventually, one day, become the artist giving them. I got a second tattoo at 15 and then again at 16 - all of which have now either been covered up or lasered, but it's most certainly what stoked the fire! By the age of 19 I was constantly drawing things that I thought would make awesome tattoos, before eventually I fashioned my own crude machine made of guitar strings and a motor. Though I can reassure you that this is the totally wrong way to start in the tattoo industry! It's just where my journey started and the road that God laid in front of me. I would also like to state to any young artist, this is not the route to take! Get an apprenticeship and learn under someone good. You won't be sorry!"

I guess the only favor I did myself, or anyone else for that matter, is that I just tattooed myself. Oh my poor leg! It was literally at this point that it became a passion, or near addiction, to put images into skin."



After a long, hard stretch of life, amounting to about ten year's worth, Jeremiah found that his first son was on his way into the world. Deciding that it was "time to get his shit together", wanting a better life and to set a better example for his son, Jeremiah decided to join the United States Air Force.

"I was stationed in New Mexico for six years. It was here where a few more exciting things happened in my life; namely oil paints, charcoal and my new baby daughter, Eden; all which were inspirations to continue the artistic path I had already started years ago. This is when my art became more readable, clear-headed and sane. When it was time for my enlistment to end, I had to decide what to do with myself. Another 'oh shit' moment!"

THE SHIT HURT LIKE A HOT IRON BEING DRAGGED ACROSS MY CHEST. SO BRUTAL AND CRUDELY DONE, I FELT LIKE A BADASS! OR SO I THOUGHT...

Should I get out and continue to turn wrenches in the civilian world, make a decent living and retirement with a normal nine-to-five, or take a huge leap of faith and do something that I had dreamed about some years ago?

"Well with a nice little nudge from my wife, Tera, I guess you can tell what I chose to do. I chose to chase a dream! I started at Main Street Tattoo in Turlock, California, in the summer of 2006 with next to no knowledge of what real tattooing was about. But I 🍌"







quickly picked up the techniques and basic rules from the owner, now my very good friend, Jose Bedolla. I stayed there for a year pumping out street shop worthy flash when I realized I needed to move to the East Coast to be closer to my children who lived with their mother in Virginia."

Once again, Jeremiah found himself on the road. Along with his wife, Tera, he packed up and moved on across the country to a small city called Salisbury in North Carolina. Working with the crew at Inksane and Anything's Possible tattoo studios, finally gave Jeremiah a chance to explore more of the custom side of tattooing.

"Working there in North Carolina, for three years, was probably the best thing that could have ever happened for my tattoo career. Drawing up my own sketches instead of pulling stuff off the wall, that was the life. The owner, and now my big brother,

Mike Jones, did not hesitate to critique my work when I asked for it... and even when I didn't ask for it! He was constantly pushing me to do better, cleaner tattoos. I also began to pick up the taste of realism and added it to my tattooing palette by admiring my co-worker, Mark T. Evans, and his amazing work. Eventually I asked him to tattoo me and I would use

every opportunity to bug the shit out of him and ask him a million questions, while watching him closely as he tattooed! Hell I still call him up if I have a question about something.

"But, home keeps calling me... back to the Bay Area, back to San Jose. It's where I currently am and I love it! I work with a great group of guys at Federal Tattoo. I am constantly pulling from and inspired by these guys!"

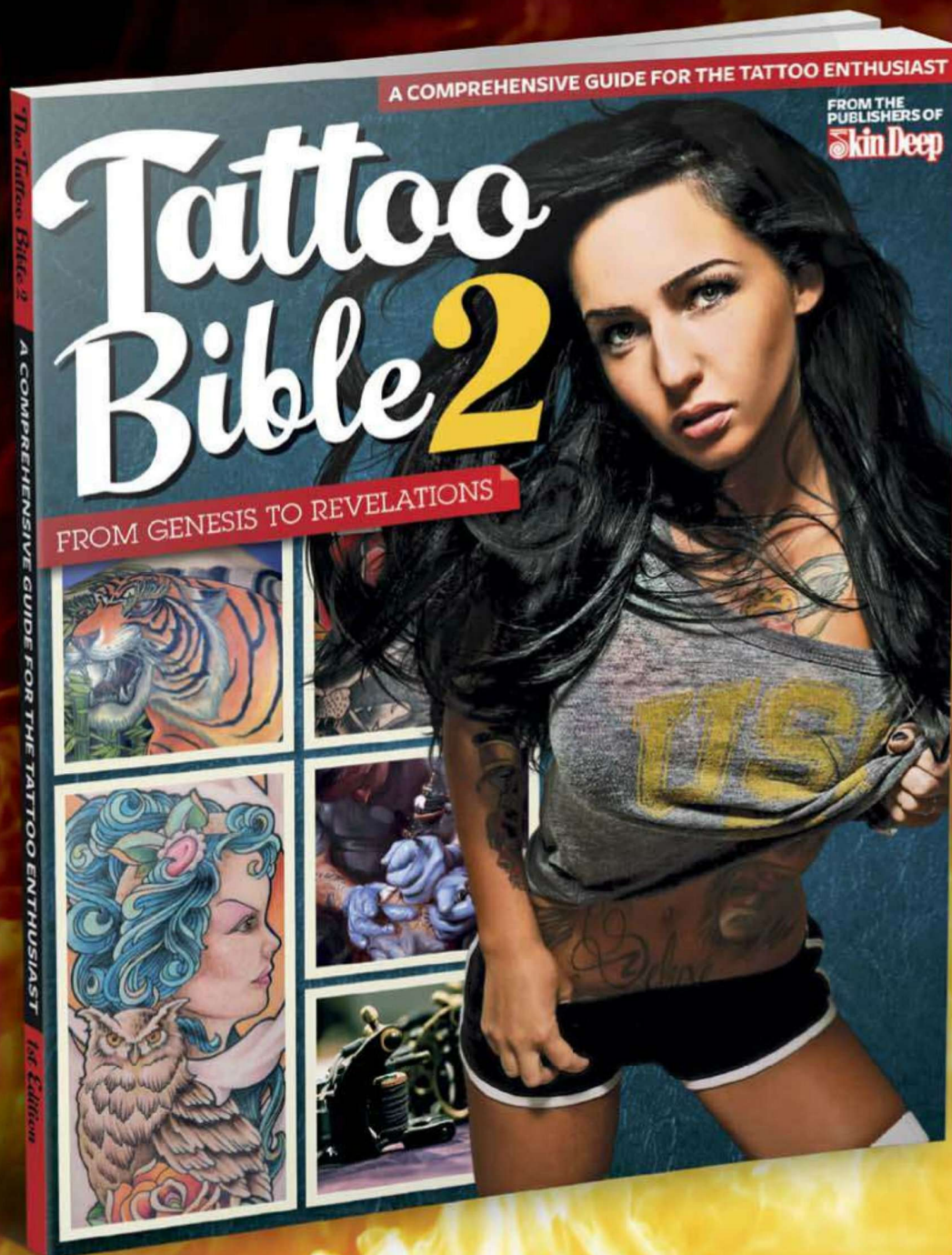
And now settled, Jeremiah's work seems to be going from strength to strength. He has also had another son, Daniel, and is focused on his family and tattooing more than ever.

"I really am living the dream. Creating art for people to wear on their skin. I realize that I am truly a lucky man to get to do what I love for a living, and am very grateful for it and grateful to all my clients and friends who provide me with a living." 🙏

HOME KEEPS CALLING ME... BACK TO THE BAY AREA, BACK TO SAN JOSE. IT'S WHERE I CURRENTLY AM AND I LOVE IT!



# THE NEW TESTAMENT



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When we published Volume One of *The Tattoo Bible*, tattooing was at a point of immense popularity. Who would have thought twelve months on that its popularity would grow into an even bigger global phenomenon? It is as much a part of popular culture today as our favourite TV shows, films and musicians. Along with that popularity comes a thirst for knowledge and a need for a respected source to answer those questions.

In this – *The Tattoo Bible 2* – we once again bring you the essential information you need to make good decisions when it comes to getting your first tattoo. You'll also find great advice from respected writers and tattoo artists. We look at everything you need to know if you're a tattoo virgin thinking about your first time, right across the board to how to get on the road to becoming a tattoo artist yourself and the right way to go about it.

We talk to respected international tattoo artists, look at the role the media has played in the sudden growth in popularity, arm you with a history of the art and discuss the different schools of tattooing. We look at the best in aftercare advice, give an overview of the international convention scene and how you can use it to your advantage and lift the lid on cover-ups. Of course - it wouldn't be a Skin Deep spin-off if we didn't lavish it with some outstanding photography and drop in a few of our best ever features to make this volume an even more collectible edition than the first.

Ultimately, *The Tattoo Bible 2* presents you with a fantastic worldview on the industry as it stands today. Just because we're having fun doesn't mean we're not taking it seriously!

From the publishers of

 **kin Deep**



Sami Tutchener at Creative Tutch - skin

Deep's favourite tattoo of the show!

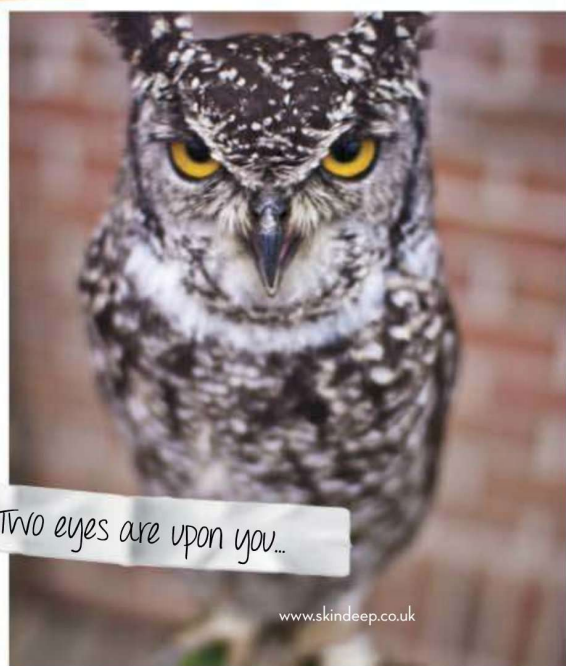
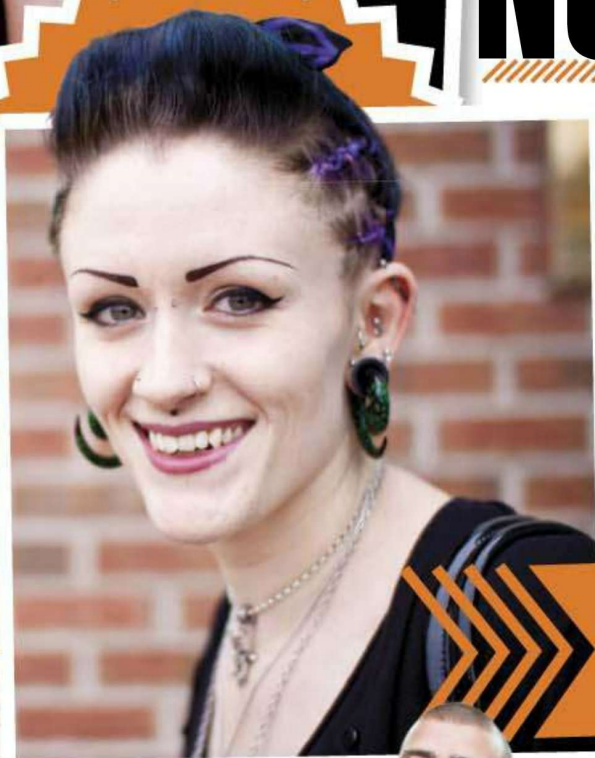
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The first show in Northampton was a real sight to behold – Agnieszka Hairesis picks up on all the good bits...



Two eyes are upon you...

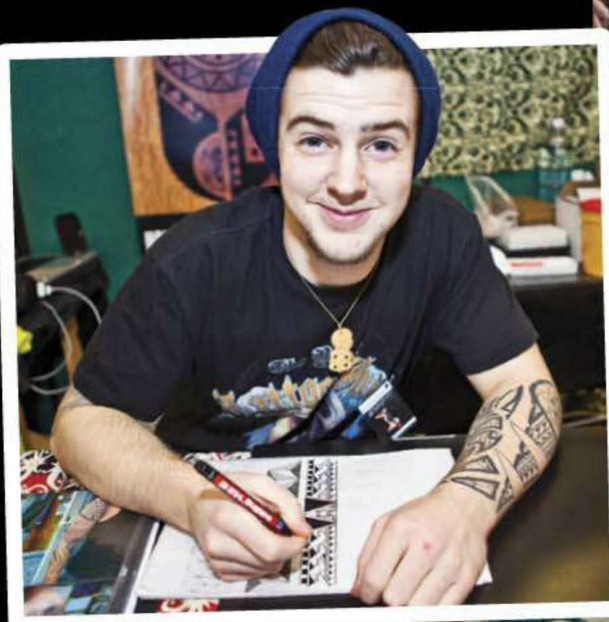




SIMON COOKE AT THE INK SPOT  
BANGS OUT ANOTHER CLASS ACT...  
WINNER OF BEST OF CONVENTION!

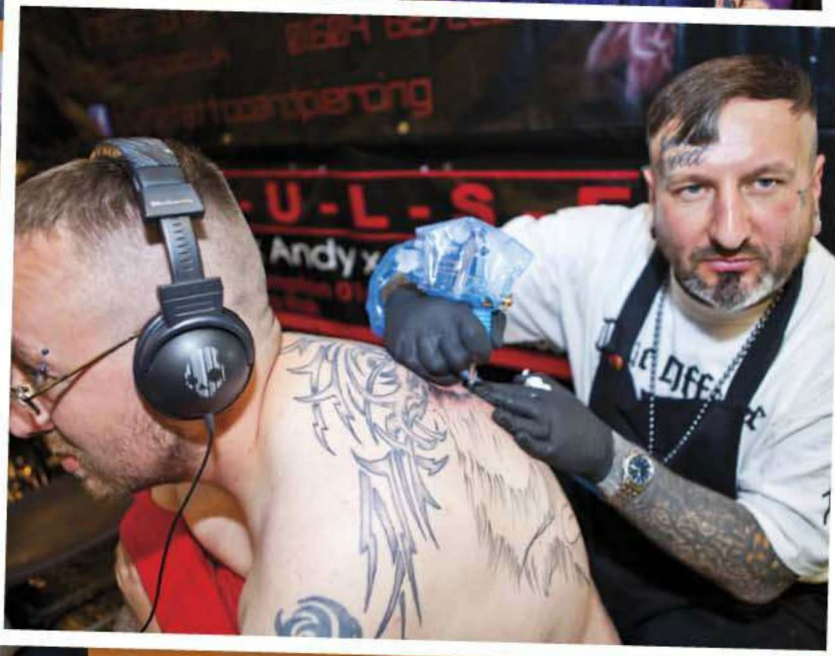
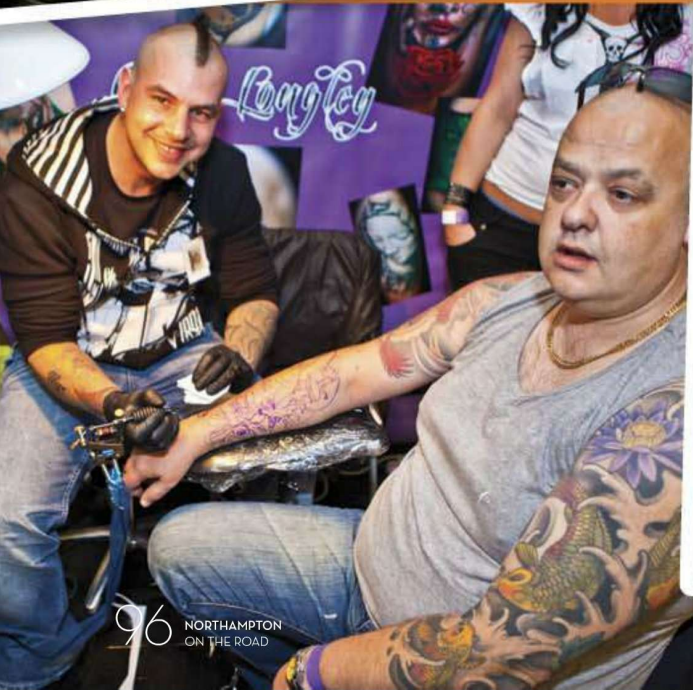
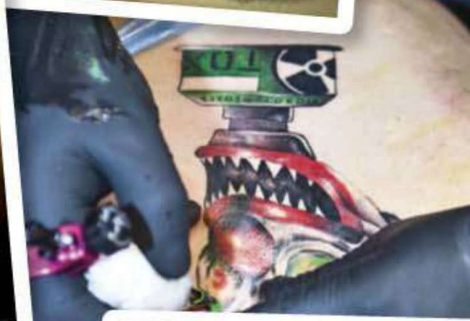






The lengths some people will go  
to for cupcakes...

# NORTHAMPTON TATTOO CONVENTION





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**Female tattoo artist wanted** to work in a new studio on the Wirral. Would be self-employed. Min three years studio experience. Able to do custom work and flash – if interested please ring Jason on 07545 534781.

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**Tattooist wanted:** Adorned Tattoo in Poole, Dorset. We are looking for an experienced full/ part-time artist to join our established, modern, spacious studio on the beautiful South Coast. Applicants must be talented, enthusiastic and capable of doing custom work. A strong portfolio and studio experience essential. Great opportunity for the right person. Also we are looking for summer guest spots to cover our busy summer period! Get in touch, email [alex@adornedtattoo.com](mailto:alex@adornedtattoo.com), or call on 01202 738290.

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**Tattooist wanted:** at Madhouse Tattoo, Herts. Usual terms apply – no time wasters or amateurs. Call Jim on 01920 877582.

**Squidink Tattoo Studio** is looking for tattooists to join our busy seaside shop in Folkestone. We are looking for someone with talent and a strong portfolio of tattoos and artwork. All styles are welcome, but Japanese and black and grey realism would be ideal. We preferably need someone with a good client-base and checkable references. We do excellent percentage rates for custom freehand work from established international artists who are looking for a guest spot. To contact us please use our contact page on our website [www.squidinktattoo.co.uk](http://www.squidinktattoo.co.uk), or call rob on his mobile 07905 341968 or the shop landline on 01303 211666.

**I am an 18-year-old female artist** with a major love of ink! I've been looking for an apprenticeship for months now, but I can't find anyone willing to take me on. If there's anyone out there in the Norfolk region willing to help me out, contact me. Email: [madmel2000@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:madmel2000@hotmail.co.uk). Tel: 07530 965956.



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## THE HEAVY HEART

I've been writing about tattoos on and off for a decade, starting as a student. I've written thousands of words, but there is one phrase I've studiously avoided using, the traditionally popular, 'heavily tattooed'...



Paula Hardy Kangelos

It's been fairly difficult, I've had to work on suitable, but still familiar sounding alternatives, such as 'large-scale tattoo coverage' or 'extensively tattooed', but I haven't yet stumbled upon the perfect alternative. The heavily tattooed maxim is so pervasive that it almost sounds like one word, a word used repeatedly by the mainstream and the niche, the blank and the tattooed – but I can't help but hear the connotation of negativity, 'heavily pregnant' or 'weighing heavily on your mind', a baby, a worry, a responsibility, a physical or mental burden, heavy, cumbersome, a load to bear, so weighty one can hardly walk.

I don't know about you, but I can't imagine a world in which I view having tattoos or being tattooed as a burden. My life as a tattooed person is not one of encumbrance, but appurtenance (Jeez I had to look that up in ye olde dictionary! Ed). I feel lucky that I'm tattooed, lucky that I get to navigate my own waters rather than kowtow to someone else, lucky I get to escape a world of nine-to-five and sometimes just plain lucky – like one Bank Holiday Monday in Amsterdam when the museum attendant rescued me from a seemingly endless queue with a complimentary ticket because "people with tattoos this nice shouldn't have to wait". Being tattooed is not a difficulty, it's a privilege.

How exactly does one define

'heavily' anyway? I've come across a variety of adjudications, things like: having a totally tattooed limb; spending 25-plus hours under the needle; 100-plus hours under the needle; or having more inky skin than pinky skin. I've even heard of definitions centering on the actual number of individual designs, ten tattoos, 20 tattoos. Of course, the number of individual designs means nothing at all – is someone with a complete, planned and executed-as-one tattoo body suit somehow less tattooed than a person with lots of tiddler-tattoos dotted about? Of course not.

### I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE A WORLD IN WHICH I VIEW HAVING TATTOOS OR BEING TATTOOED AS A BURDEN

One of my favourite answers to the "How many tattoos do you have?" question from ordinary chaps on the street is, "I'm working towards just one." But what happens when you are nearing the reality of "just one" and are on the cusp of being 'finished'? To the extensively tattooed, it is the blank skin that is most precious.

I'm yet to experience this for myself, I still have some large, if inconvenient and well-hidden spaces, such as the insides of thighs and bottom(!), but my lovely husband, tattooer, Daniel Morris of Rain City Tattoo has just one single significant gap left. This solitary 'blankie bit' has been the subject of much conversation, we've verbally cycled through a variety of plans for filling it. We've talked of themes,

icons, artists, studios and potential travel plans, but none of them come to fruition. I've concluded that despite the purposeful tone to the repeated discussion, Dan is not yet ready to emotionally engage with a decision, much less physically engage. Generally, an almost completely tattooed body is not inhabited by a mind that fears commitment, so perhaps the final space represents something more profound, more life-changing than even the very first tattoo.

A well-respected European tattooer working in London spoke to me about the end of his own personal quest for complete coverage and how it altered the way he felt about tattooing others. He had observed that his interest had shifted to the preparation of the design, the draftsmanship and away from the tattooing process itself.

A tattoo artist with no tattoos at all is a controversial topic because we consider the shared experience to be vital in the tattoo process. We want the person that marks us to understand the pain, the

consequence and the excitement of the moment, and have trouble believing that a tattoo-free-tattooer

can sufficiently empathise. So what of the tattooer who's no longer physically participating in the tattoo collecting experience? Perhaps reaching this point is akin to the end of a wonderful love affair. You will always think of it fondly and enjoy the memories of what you had, but you are no longer enthralled, captivated, consumed.

Dan just isn't ready to move his tattoo collecting experience to the past tense, but continues to ponder all possibilities for that last gap because, like in love, anticipation is part of the fun.

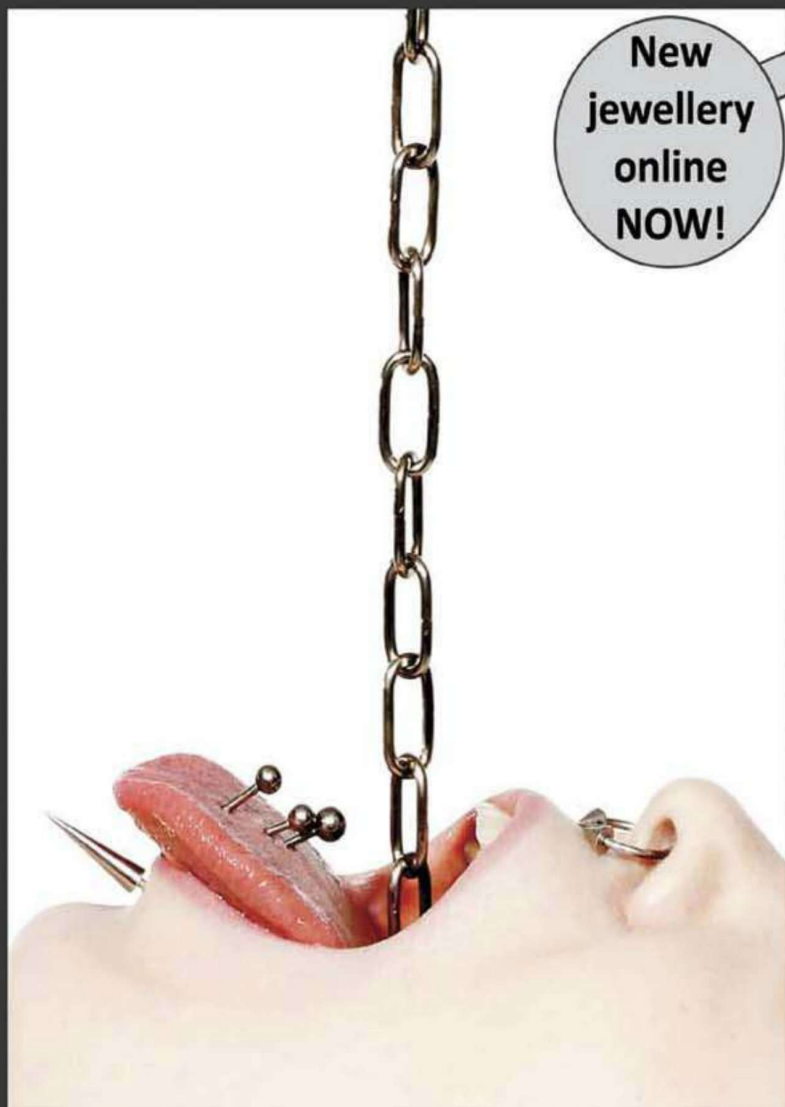
So don't rush to the finish line, but live in the moment, enjoy the tattoos you have, but also enjoy the ones you may have. Let the only 'heaviness' be our tattooed hearts when our skins can hold no more. 🐾





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